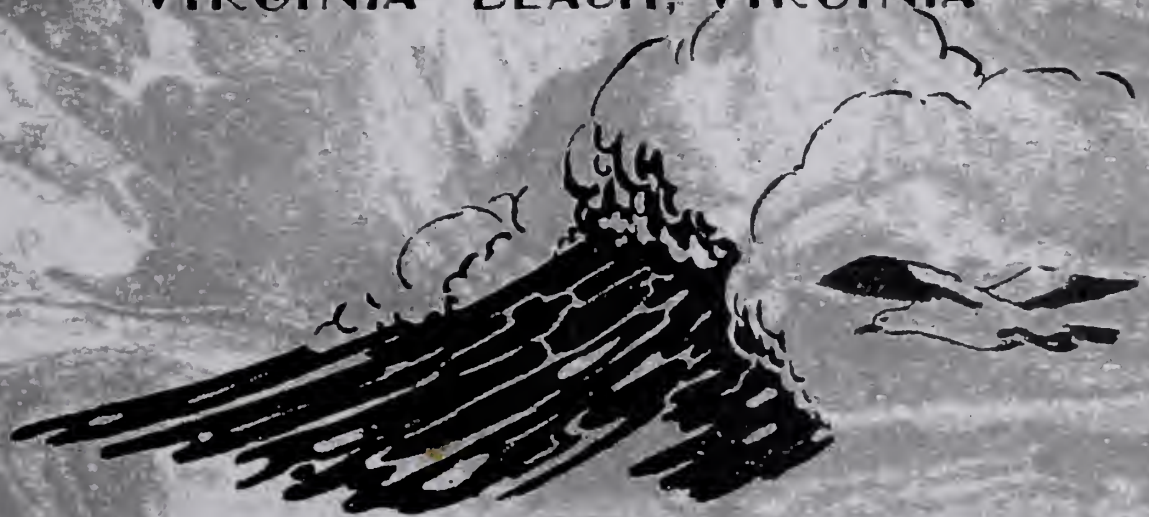
The Cavalier

VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA



THE CAVALIER HOTEL, VA. BEACH, VA.

July 16, 1998

The Cavalier Hotel, built in 1926 and opened to the public in 1927, has stood majestically on it's terraced hill for 71 years. The mention of it's name brings to mind Virginia Beach and the fine accomodations offered by this opulent resort facility over the years.

Many thousands of words have been written about the Old Cavalier on the hill - but, in my opinion, few writers have done the southern belle the justice she so richly deserves as has Jean Geddes, staff writer for the Virginia Beach Sun, in three articles, which appeared in the newspaper, beginning June 16, 1993. and continuing to June 30, 1993.

This article is what you will read first in the booklet.

Following this article will be pages 1 through 65. These newspaper articles from the Virginia Beach Sun, the Virginian-Pilot Ledger-Star and the Richmond Times Dispatch, describe what it was like, through the eyes of some very dedicated employees, at the Cavalier during the early days as well as over the years.

Only by reading this material can we realize how elegant and opulent the hotel was.

It attracted the rich and famous from all over the world and the guest list reads like the who's who in America as well as abroad.

At the end of the booklet you will read some exchange correspondence between the President of the Cavalier, Lou Windholz, and Tommy Thompson as well as some other correspondence. Tommy was the engineering half of the Architectural Firm of Neff and Thompson. (The Firm was awarded the contract to build the Cavalier.) Tommy Thompson was actually the savior of the Cavalier, in it's infancy, when the hotel was about to go under in the late twenties.

It was Tommy who came to the rescue by raising enough money to keep everything going until the new management could reorganize and put a survival plan into effect.

During the early days, you could stay at the hotel for $10 a day - which included three meals. Doesn't seem like much by todays standards but ten dollars in the 1920's and 1930's was a lot of money. Money was an absolute necessity if you planned to spend time at the Cavalier.

Service is what the Cavalier was famous for both at the table and elswhere.

Most of the time, in the early days, there were more employees than guests.

It would be impossible for a business to survive, today, using that much manpower.

Bobby Williford

The Cover: The cover for the booklet was copied from a brochure distributed by the Old Cavalier sometime in the 1930's. The inset photograph is by Bobby Williford.

The Virginia Beach Sun, June 16, 1993.
THE CAVALIER HOTEL

PART I - THE BEGINNING

AFTER FIRE RAVAGED THE PRINCESS ANNE HOTEL, 60 ACRES AND $2 MILLION LED TO THE CAVALIER: USED TO BE THE FINEST ON THE EAST COAST. DID NIXON BURN WATERGATE TAPES IN THE HUNT ROOMS FIREPLACE?
By: Jean Geddes

Exclusive to the Virginia Beach Sun. This is the first of three parts telling the story of the Cavalier Hotel at the oceanfront at 42nd street and Atlantic Avenue. Thank yous are in order for Bob Wilson, manager, Cavalier on the Hill, and Glenn Graham, head of marketing and sales, who gave of their time to be interviewed and arranged for any and all other interviews for this series. Other installments will include the middle years and present years of the Cavalier Hotel.

Some call her the "Queen", others refer to her as the "Grand Dame", but no matter what they call her, she is a southern belle and perhaps the grandest of them all.

She is the Cavalier Hotel, and she still reigns supreme.

After 1907 when the princess Anne Hotel at the oceanfront burned, there was no luxury hotel in Virginia Beach. A group of approximately 100 area businessmen saw the need for a new and grand hotel and gathered together to discuss building an "opulent" one.

The results were astounding. Sixty acres were optioned on which to build the hotel. Stock, both preferred and common, was sold and before long, $1.5 million was raised to build the structure and $500,000 was amassed to furnish it.

A contest was run by a local newspaper to name the hotel and the Cavalier was chosen. Thirteen months later the finished product stood proudly, high on a dune overlooking the ocean, the pride of the entire area. She was constructed of steel with all steel covered in cement. Over 500,000 bricks were used in the construction.

WHEN THE CAVALIER OPENED ITS DOORS, it was the finest hotel in existance on the entire east coast. There was no other like her. The week of April 4 to 9, 1927, held grand ceremonies, returning the grand style of hostelery to Virginia Beach. The Norfolk and Western Railroad named a train "The Cavalier" and people could board it in Chicago, switch to Norfolk Southern and get off at the steps of the hotel in Virginia Beach. Soon New York City and Washington, D.C. followed suit.

The affluent throughout the nation wanted to come: be wined and dined at this magnificent hostelry on the shores of the atlantic. It was THE place to come and stay by the sea.

And they came! the rich, the famous, the ambassadors presidents, authors, film stars, broadway stars, F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife, Zelda, came and stayed for months.

The present manager of the Cavalier on the hill, Bob Wilson, perhaps knows more about the history of the hotel than anyone. He constantly collects information, including artifacts and articles, on the hotel and records them as he receives them.

"We dont know in which room the Fitzgeralds stayed", he said, "for room numbers change, and we don't know if he did any writing here. Usually, people who were famaus just wanted to come here for a vacation and some rest and recreation.

Wilson named many others who came and stayed, including: Nelson Eddy, Rudy Vallee, Johnny Weismuller, Jean Harlow, Bette Davis, Bob Hope, "and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt came and brought a troop of girl scouts with her." said the manager.

CELEBRITIES ARRIVED IN THEIR Rolls Royces and the hotel provided a special dining room for their chauffeurs. The guests sat on the long porches and had tea and cinamon toast beside the large salt water pool, or "The Plunge", as it was first called. In the evening the limousines took the guests off for a little discreet gambling & drinking at nearby clubs.

Advance reservations were a must. Guests were treated like royalty and every convenience was offered, including a barber shop, a drug store and stock brokerage office complete with ticker tape. there was a hotel physician available at all times. There were 195 guest rooms and most of the employees were housed on the Cavalier grounds.

The bathrooms were elegant, with four water handles on every bath tub: fresh cold, fresh hot, shower/tub and cold salt. It was believed by many, Wilson explained that the sea water was medically beneficial. So the hotel made it possible for them to take a sea water bath or shower in their own tub. Most women loved how their complection looked and felt after a sea water bath.

In addition there was an ice water spiqot on every sink in every bathroom of the hotel. Refrigeration as it is today, did not exist. The only way to refrigerate was with blocks of ice.

"I know of no hotel in the world, even up to this year, that offers an ice water spiqot in every room", said Wilson. At that time, near the top of the hotel, was a large vat made of wood. This was filled with large blocks of Ice, then the ice was covered with water. Gravity provided the impetus to get the ice water to each room. The ice water line was insulated with several inches of cork, so instant ice water was available when the spigot was activated."

Dining at the Cavalier has always been a grand tradition. When the hotel opened officially on april 7, 1927, 24 large tables were set with fine linen and utensils for the seven course meal that evening. Lynnhaven oysters were served, then seafood Lillian, Chicken, french string beans, baked potatoes, salad, followed by strawberries "plombiere", macarcons and lady fingers.

Dining in the Pocahontas Room was a very formal affair.

At one time it was a private mens club for wealthy hunters, Horsemen and fishermen. When you visited the hotel, you could bring your own hunting dogs as there were facilities to care for them. Or you could rent some from the hotel which had their own dogs.

DUCK SHOOTING AT BACK BAY - and in the Currituck Sound caught the fancy of sportsmen everywhere. Ducks came early to Back Bay and would remain late into the season.

Starting from the Cavalier, it was not a difficult trip to Back Bay shooting grounds because baloon-tied vehicles rode easily over the hard sandy beach along this part of the Virginia Coast, and from the hotel to Back Bay was a pleasant trip.

When the hunters had taken their bags of game, they returned to the hotel where the chef would expertly prepare the fowl to the guests taste. The hunter would dine, still in his hunting togs, before an open fire, smoke his pipe and when he was finished, tell just how the thing was done.

Wilson said that whenever President Nixon stayed at the Cavalier, his favorite place in the entire hotel was the Hunt Room.

"He spent as much time there as possible. Regardless of the outside temperature, he insisted that a fire be burning in the fire place", Wilson said. Wilson also related a rumor that went around the hotel about President Nixon, and the missing 18 minutes of tape of a conversation in the oval office between the president and Mr. Bob Halderman. Mr. Nixon's enemies believed that if they could find the missing tape there would be sufficient evidence to impeach the President. The tape was not found but the president was forced to resign and was not impeached. No one from the F.B.I., C.I.A., or any other agency ever came and checked the ashes in the Hunt Room fireplace.

"Anyway, that is the rumor that went around the hotel", said Wilson.

The only original piece of furniture remaining from the early days of the Cavalier is a cogsnell radio cabinet, with an oil painting on the door.

RADIO WAS NEW. The first crystal sets came onto the scene in 1922 and when the Cavalier became the leader in having the best and the first in many things, it was also the site for radio station WSEA, the third station in America to broadcast coast to coast.

When Charles Lindbergh flew his "Spirit of St. Louis" plane to Paris, France, he became an overnight hero. The president of the United States, Calvin Coolidge, sent a navy warship to bring him home and as the ship entered the Chesapeake Bay and passed the Old Cape Henry Lighthouse on June 10, 1927, Norfolk Mayor, S. Heth Tyler, from the Cavalier Hotel, became the first american to extend radio congratulations. "Well done, he said as he welcomed home Charles Lindbergh on Radio Station WSEA, at the Cavalier Hotel, Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Photo by Brooks

Nixon Arrives for Beach Holiday

Richard C. Nixon (Second From Left) Enters the Cavalier Hotel at Virginia Beach as He's Interviewed on the Run By Ledger-Star Reporter Charlton Harrell. At Far Left Is Cavalier Owner Sidney Banks. At Right, Is Gordon Shreman General Manager of the Hotel

THE CAVALIER, PART II - THE MIDDLE YEARS. From the Virginia Beach Sun June 23, 1993.

THE GOLDEN YEARS CAME TO AN ABRUPT HALT: THE WAR BEGAN
NAVY TOOK CONTROL OF THE HOTEL IN 1942 FOR RADAR TRAINING
By Jean Geddes. Special to the Va. Beach Sun. Second of three articles.

During the 1930's The Cavalier became known as the aristocrat of the east coast and it hosted the aristocrats from all over the nation.

Presidents, actors and actresses, politicians, sports figures, railroad, oil, banking and business moguls came to enjoy the hotels hospitality. Seven U.S. Presidents came to spend their summer holiday by the sea at the Cavalier.

Already considered the showplace on the atlantic. the building was soon enhanced with the sunken gardens that were the "talk of the town." Charles Gillette of Richmond, landscape architect, studied the grounds of the early great Virginia Plantations; Shirley, Westover, Brandon and then devised his own plan for the grounds.

Down the hill from the hotel and near the Oceans edge, Bayberry jasmine and myrtle were planted. Brick steps and walk ways were constructed throughout the sunken gardens and flowers and shrubs were planted so that year round it was a symphony of color. There was also a wisteria arbor and the grounds were constantly being improved with new plantings even into the late 1930's.

Carlos Wilson, who has been with the Cavalier for 56 years, has been honored by the city's tourism department and recognized by the mayor. Wilson remembers when he first came to work at the hotel gardens.

"Every day flowers from the garden would be brought in and placed in vases and baskets for the lobby, the dining rooms and every guest room. It was a lovely gracious time at the hotel," he said.

He also remembers the greats and the "lesser greats" who came to the hotel and recalls that every sunday, after church services a horse show would be held on the grounds of the Cavalier, something to which all the guests looked forward to. Pointing along Pacific Avenue, in front of the old Cavalier he said. "Right there were the tracks for the railroad that would bring guests directly to the hotel".

WHEN THE BEACH CLUB CPENED on memorial day, 1929, the Mac Farland twins, former saxophonists with the Fred Waring orchestra, played for the guests. It was and remains an elegant club.

The hardware dance floor, open to the sun during sunday tea dances and to the stars in the evenings was a favorite place with not only Cavalier guests, but local people as well. It here that the best and most popular big bands of the era came: Glenn Miller, Harry James, Guy Lombardo, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey and many others. Singers included the still famous Frank Sinatra.

When Buddy Rogers and his band came to play, the band leader came down with a severe sore throat and was ordered to bed by the hotel physician. his wife, Mary Pickford, early film star and "Americas Sweetheart" hurried to his side to nurse him back to health and the two stayed at the Cavalier until he was able to continue with his music there.

The beach in front of the club was free for all to enjoy, spread blankets and listen to the music of the bands. Couples could even dance on the sand under the stars or sit and listen to the music at the Sunday Tea Dances. Many felt the beach in front of the club was the finest part of the shoreline.

Cabanas at the beach for the most affluent guests were popular and quite large, including a place to entertain tneir friends, card tables if they wished and even telephone lines that went directly to the hotel dining room where orders could be given for waiters, in formal dress, to bring to the seaside.

In the very early days, guests who wanted to play golf were allowed to use the Princess Anne Country Club course and were told that soon the Cavalier would have it's own course which was being constructed on ninety acres nearby. When it opened many famous golfers came: Babe Zaharias, Jimmy Demaret and Sam Snead, who in 1935 won the Virginia Open at the Cavalier Golf and Yacht Club Course.

Then the golden years of the hotel ended abruptly. World War II began.

THE U.S. NAVY TOOK OVER the hotel on October 3, 1942, and used it as a radar training school until the war ended. Not only officers, chiefs and enlisted men were dormed at the hotel, but 30 waves as well were housed in the northwest wing on the second floor, four to a room, while the men were housed six to a room. The large hotel swimming pool was drained and used as a classroom 24 hours a day.

Manager of the Cavalier on the hill, Bob Wilson, said that in 1991 he was contacted by a former WAVE who was stationed there in 1944-45, Helen Weiss, from Kansas City. She had worked in training and while there fell in love with one of the young sailors who was attending classes, David Dorn, from New Jersey. They courted for two weeks, then married. They had a happy life together and raised two children.

Not having returned to the Cavalier since they left in the 1940's, the couple planned to return in July 1991 and celebrate their 47th wedding anniversary at the place where they met. They had made their reservations when in March of that year, David died.

Helen contacted Bob Wilson to ask if he would be interested in having the American Flag that had been draped over her husband's coffin. He said certainly he would. She came herself to the hotel bringing the flag plus many pictures of the fleet service school.

When the Cavalier on the hill is open, we proudly fly that flag every day, Wilson said.

Carlos, who still enjoys working seven days a week, by his choice, at the Cavalier at the beachfront, remembers and greets guests at the front door as warmly as when he first started at the Cavalier. Guests ask for him if they don't see him and he has been called by many: Mr. Cavalier. Vividly he recalls when the news came to the Beach Club that Japan had surrendered.

I was taking care of a Lt. Beady's table of guests that evening at dinner when the news came over the radio. There were many Navy ships lined out there on the water and all of a sudden whistles and horns began blowing, and at the club people shouted and got up and began dancing and kept on into the early morning hours. Lt. Brady called me over to the table and put a $100 bill in my hand and said, "Carlos, buy anything you want." It was a happy time for everybody", he said.

Even after the war, celebrities continued to come to the hotel including Hank Ketcham, the famous cartoonist who created "Dennis the manace", modeled after his son whom he brought along with him. Later he drew several "Dennis" series telling about their visit.

Three months later the Cavalier became a private club. Along the beachfront other hotels began building and motels sprang up which served the needs of post war traveling America with their informality. The Cavalier suffered from the cost of upkeep and competition. Finally, the grand hotel closed its doors in 1973, but like the phoenix, it was destined to rise again, just as grand and popular as ever with a new interior facelift, a new owner and manager.

Again it would enter the world of grand hotels and serve the public as it marched toward the new century.

Virginia Beach Sun - Wed. June 30, 1993.

THE CAVALIER - PART III

The Cavalier: The hotel that made Virginia Beach famous, now looks to the future.

By: Jean Geddes

Exclusive to the Virginia Beach Sun - last of three articles.

The hotel that made Virginia Beach famous was destined to re-open and become even more grand than when it first welcomed guests at it's grand opening in 1927.

On the last day of December, 1959, Gene Dixon, Sr., owner of Kyanite Mining Corporation, and his partners purchased the hotel. On August 28, 1961, he became the sole owner of the Cavalier and today his son, Gene Dixon, Jr., continues to oversee the renovation and resturation of the Cavalier, slowly and surely turning it into a grand showplace on the sandy shores of the Atlantic.

The Dixon family has retained the services of American interiors of Norfolk to re-do the entire hotel complex.

Joan and Gary Herman, owners of American interiors, said they are greatly privileged to work weekly with Mrs. Barbara Dixon, the owners wife, on the design, color scheme, furnishings of all rooms.

"The Dixons are greatly devoted to restoring the hotel." said Gary Herman.

AT THE CAVALIER ON THE HILL there are 28 completely redone guest rooms in the northwest wing and eight more are expected to be completed within the next three months. A highlight of the north wing will be the Cavalier Suite, which when completed will be the deluxe suite in the hotel. It will contain an entrance foyer, bedroom, living room and bathroom constructed of marble.

There will be a two-person whirlpool, built-in hair dryer, bidet, and the traditional furnishings for the suite handcrafted. Although the suite will also have some antique furnishings.

The color scheme will be different from any other room (although all rooms are different) and the entrance foyer will be a handcrafted table of mahogany with the name: Cavalier carved in gold leaf. This table, while awaiting the suite to be completed, now sits in the general manager's office at the Cavalier Oceanfront.

Mrs. Dixon has great input and ideas for colors, designs and furnishings for all the rooms", Herman said, with great respect for her taste.

Major renovations continue throughout the year and guests continue to come through the year, as well. Glenn Graham, director of sales and marketing, who has been with the hotel for over eight years, explained that the Dixon's ordered all rooms to be gutted right down to the concrete, then new walls, new wiring, new plumbing, air-conditioning and rooms much larger than the original ones,

and baths to be twice the size of the former ones.

AGAIN THE CAVALIER IS THE GRAND HOTEL of this era with a ballroom at the beach club, the largest in a hotel in the entire state of Virginia.

An interesting note is that the hotel has it's own construction and landscaping crew, including plumbers, electricians and groundkeepers.

POPULAR WITH THE GUESTS is a new, unique idea of Graham's which was initiated three years ago and has proven successful, called "Sunshine Guantee", each guest, when he chooses the Cavalier for his or her summer vacation, and if a rain day occurrs while visiting, during June, July or August, gets a formal certificate good for a complimentary night's stay in conjunction with a future visit.

The quality of life at the hotel remains the same as always-graciousness. Each employee is chosen carefully. The results are apparent.

Today, 80 percent of the hotel business is in group meetings, conferences and conventions while 20 per-cent is social.

"We keep up with trends in the traveling public." said Graham adding that there is a great focus as well as the hotel on children". "kids love the hotel with our two large playgrounds, the kiddie pool and our childrens activities program geared for different age levels."

There is also a kid's cafe where they are fed free while parents dine in one of the several other dining rooms. Entertainment is provided every night for the children. Graham said that the Cavalier is the leader in the hospitality industry.

"There are 140 hotels here but none with 18 acres on the ocean-front," he said.

Vice President and general manager, Dan Batchelor, who has been with the hotel for 16 years, beginning his career as a bus-boy, said that it's important to show the hotel's past as they continue to invest in it's future. He said during the school year, frequent tours of the hotel are offered to elementry school children.

But, children are not the only ones who love taking a tour of the premeses and Bob Wilson, manager of the Cavalier on The Hill, gives personal tours to any and all who show an interest in the famous landmark and tourist come, wanting to know all about it's history, who who stayed where and what it looks like now.

Everyone connected with the Cavalier is proud of the convention facilities, some of the finest in the nation, with wonderful panoramic views of the ocean and huge dividable rooms with sky high ceilings.

While 1993 is the 30th anniversary of Virginia Beach as a city, it is also the 20th anniversary of the Cavalier on the hill.

It's obvious the popularity of the hotel with its 400 guest rooms is due in part to excellent teamwork on the part of all employees, each eager to see that guests enjoy their stay at the Grand Hotel.

A final note: If you pass Glenn Graham in the hall or visit his office at the Cavalier Oceanfront, you most likely will do a double take. For Graham formerly was an actor, well known both on prime time television and on the California and New York stage.

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THE VIRGINIAN PILOT SEPT. 8, 1939

MARY PICKFORD, FAN IDOL OF SILENT MOVIES, VISITS BEACH.

FLIES FROM HOLLYWOOD TO SEE SICK HUSBAND, BUDDY ROGERS AT CAVALIER HOTEL.

LEAVES TO BE CROWNED QUEEN OF TOBACCO FESTIVAL AT SOUTH BOSTON BY GOVERNOR PRICE.

Mary Pickford, the idol of all movie fandom in the days of silent pictures, was a visitor at Virginia Beach on wednesday. She flew from Hollywood to attend the National tobacco Festival at South Boston but came to Virginia Beach first to visit her husband, Buddy Rogers, at the Cavalier Hotel where he has been confined to his bed with a bad throat and threatned pneumonia since monday.

Miss Pickford left Hollywood by plane tuesday afternoon and reached Washington wednesday. From there she proceeded immediately by train to Richmond and was received by Governor Price and city officials. She rushed from there by her husband's private plane to his bedside at the Cavalier Finding him much improved she left thrusday morning for South Boston where she will preside as Queen of the Tobacco Festival, returning here Saturday to join her husband and fly to Newark, N.J., his condition permitting.

Buddy Rogers with his orchestra has been filling an engagement at the Cavalier Beach Club which terminated monday. He was to have gone to Winston Salem and Durham, N.C. to fill engagements at these points but was forced to cancel them on account of his illness. His orchestra has gone to Atlantic City where he expects to join them next week for engagements.

Miss Pickford, the former film star, who won acclaim as "America's Sweethart", left Hollywood, California tuesday afternoon at 4:30 O'clock (P.S.T.), on a commercial airliner, and landed in Washington yesterday morning after an all-night flight accross the continent. From the Capital she went to Richmond aboard the private car of W.A. Aiken, Superintendent of the R.F. & P. Railroad, where she was greeted by Governor Price and officials of the state Chamber of Commerce.

From Richmond, she flew to Norfolk in her husband's private airplane, which had been sent there to meet her. She landed at the City Airport shortly after 4:30 O'clock yesterday afternoon, slightly tired but anxious to hurry to the Cavalier Hotel to see her husband.

Miss Pickford was greeted by Mayor John A. Gurkin, William S. Harney, manager of the Norfolk Association of Commerce; Francis E. Turin, Mgr. of the Norfolk Advertising Board; Roland Eaton, Manager of the Cavalier Hotel, and Leon Block, of New York, a friend of Mr. Rogeers. She went straight from the airport to the hotel in a station wagon driven by Mr. Eaton.

Mayor Gurkin presented her with a City of Norfolk Commemorative

Half Dollar, a copy of the book "Through the Years in Norfolk", and a card entitiling her to the courtesies of the city.

VIRGINIAN PILOT, SEPT. 1939.

MARY PICKFORD EXPECTED HERE FOR WEEKS VISIT.

WILL REIGN AS QUEEN OF TOBACCO FESTIVAL AT SOUTH BOSTON.

BUDDY ROGERS, HER HUSBAND, AND HIS ORCHESTRA HAS WEEKS ENGAGEMENT AT CAVALIER BEACH CLUB.

Mary Pickford, the world known and much beloved silent picture movie star, is expected to arrive here tomorrow with her husband, Buddy Rogers, for an extended visit. While here she will stop at the Cavalier Hotel and will be seen at the Beach Club, where Buddy Rogers and his orchestra will be the attraction through Labor Day.

Featured artists in this orchestra include Meta Stauder and Marjorie Whitney, songstresses; Johnny Morris, song stylist and drummer man; The Four Notes, composed of a queen and three kings; Scotty Burbank, novelty instrumentalist; Joe Sodja, guitar banjo artist; Mickey Sabol, romantic baritone; the trumpet choir and the Rogers Glee Club.

While in this section Miss Pickford will reign as Queen of the National Tobacco Festival on September sixth, in South Boston, Va.

THE VIRGINIA BEACH BEACON, APR. 5, 1992.

HOTEL ON THE HILL

THE CAVALIER HOTEL, well known to the rich and famous for it's gracious service and fine trappings, is celebrating it's 65th birthday today with a special party. Guests will get a glimpse of renovations that smack of the hotel's glory days.

On it's birthday grand old hotel's glory days are re-visited.

CAVALIER CELEBRATION

By: Mary Reid Barrow, correspondent.

THE CAVALIER may never again offer a seperate dining room for the guests' chauffeurs or a fully equipped kennel for the guest's hunting dogs.

The grand old hotel may never bring back the saltwater spiqots in each guest room that could draw a medicinal seawater bath, or the ice water spiqots from which chilled water poured.

But the historic hotel on the hill is celebrating it's 65th birthday today and is using the occasion to announce that it is turning back the clock.

"We're renovating the whole hotel to bring it back to the way it was.", said Don Batchelor, the Cavalier's Vice President and General Manager.

The Virginia Beach landmark, high on a former sand dune of Pacific avenue, is aiming to recapture the essence of it's youth. When the Cavalier opened in 1927, the rich and the famous were drawn to the elegant hotel because of it's gracious service and it's fine trappings.

And soon a stay at the Cavalier again will include such old-fashioned activities as sipping afternoon tea in the Raleigh Room, settling down on a comfortable sofa in the lobby to read the newspaper or stepping outside to play croquet on the lush green lawn.

A stay at the Cavalier will mean a leisherly vacation in a leisurly completely renovated hotel room, redone with 1990's ammenities in the oritinal 1920's style. one wing will be ready this summer and all the rooms should be completed by 1996.

In fact, it may even mean that the old Cavalier will be open year round and the new Cavalier on the oceanfront, built in 1973, will be open only for the summer season, Bachelor said.

"we're here for the long term", he added, "we're committed to keeping the property here."

Though locals don't make a habit of staying at a hotel in their own city, the Cavalier means a lot more than just a hotel to Virginia Beach. In fact the Cavalier has long been a part of life for many beach families.

"If anyone had anything that was important to them, they held it at the Cavalier", said Helen Wise, who grew up at the beach, especially weddings.

The Cavalier hosts about 200 wedding receptions a year, half of them in the Raleigh Room. The Room is a brides dream come true, with it's handsome fireplace, floor-to-ceiling columns and cherry bright-glassed-in sun porch, still equipped with the original ceiling fans.

"Someone has two or three dauthters and you do every wedding", Bachelor said", "thats neat."

Many beach kids got a launching of another sort at the Cavalier too, summer jobs.

"We have an alumni of bellmen, waiters and cabana boys", Batchelor said. "Now they are returning as as grown men. They go out of their way to tell me a story about when they worked here, or about the time their son worked here."

Although Helen Wise's children never worked at the Cavalier, she knows full well how much the hotel means to the beach. Her own daughters wedding reception there in 1969 was just one of many events that has drawn her family to the old hotel.

Her father was one of many community-minded people who thought the resort needed a new facility to replace the elegant Princess Anne Hotel after it burned in 1906. He, along with a large group of local businessmen, became an original investor in the Cavalier.

"He didn't invest much, just enough, he told me, to build a bathroom." Wise said.

As a youngster she attended cotillions at the hotel and remembers attending a friend's birthday party at the olympic - size indoor pool.. Wise and her husband, spencer, spent their courting days at the Cavalier Beach Club.

The Beach Club opened down on the oceanfront two years after the hotel itself and attracted some of the most famous bands of the time each week during the summer, band leaders such as Sammy Kaye, Benny Goodman and Tommy Dorsey, appeared to play in the evenings and at Sunday Tea Dances. One summer, a young Frank Sinatra sang with the Tommy Dorsey band.

"One of my biggest memories was when Frank Sinatra sang before he was famous", Wise said."My, he was good, even then.

Today, to mark it's 65th birthday, the Cavalier is giving a party to show several hundred city officials and out-of-town business and convention interests just how many years young the hotel is. Guests will be entertained on the elegant lobby floor, which has been kept in It's original style since the hotel opened on this day in 1927.

As they walk about the hotel, they'll be lucky to run accross Bob Wilson, the old Cavalier's manager, and Charles Wilson, who has been employed there for 58 years!

The two Wilsons could be called the curators of the Cavaliers past.

Bob Wilson has researched the history of the old building. He's also trying to gather up early artifacts, such as some of the original table silver and some of the spigot handles that say sea water and ice water.

Carlos Wilson can tell many a tale about the old days at the Cavalier, wheh he used to carry blocks of ice up to a wooden vat on the top floor every day to keep the ice water taps supplied. He could tell about how they always rang the bell in the tower on New Years Eve until the bell disappeared when the navy took over the hotel in World War Two.

The wooden key boxes where guest's messages and keys have been deposited since 1927 are still in use behind the check-in desk and an elaborately decorated radio cabinet in the lobby is the only piece of original furniture the hotel still owns. Everything else disappeared during those World War Two years.

A glass case in the Raleigh Room holds a china plate from the dinner service created for the Cavalier when it opened. Pale Blue, it has a scene depicting the first landing of the English Settlers in 1607.

A highlight is an olympic-size indoor swimming pool. Although it is now a freshwater pool, it, like the guest room, once had salt water piped in from the ocean.

"When the navy was here, they emptied the pool, put blackout curtains on the windows", said Bob Wilson, "and had a classroom in the pool." The pool bottom with it's slant down to the deep end made an ideal auditorium.

In addition to enjoying the lobby floor, birthday guests also are in for an interesting tour of the guest room renovation process. The rooms are being stripped down to the concrete walls and built back up again.

One of the rooms under renovation shows how the hotel was originally constructed. The steel beams were wrapped in two layers of concrete. There is four feet between the top of one concrete ceiling and the bottom of the concrete floor above. The Cavalier has never had a noise problem, Batchelor said, in an understatement.

The hotels Y shape gives it stability eventhough the foundation was built on a shifting sand dune. "In a storm, this baby may leak," Batchelor said "but she'll stand."

When owner Gene Dixon, Jr.'s family purchased the hotel in the 1960's, the old Cavalier really was showing it's age, Bachelor said. It would have been less costly to tear it down than to maintain it for the past several years and restore it.

"Bird's were flying around inside in 1976 when I went to work here", Batchelor said. "This is an exciting time for us.

The Virginia Beach Beacon - July 1, 1977.

SERVING BREAKFAST IN TAILS AT THE CAVALIER
By: Jim Stiff, Beacon Staff Writer.

Dining out in Virginia Beach these days is a turnoff for C.I. Siler. He Doesn't like it because he has to cut his own steak, carve his own chicken and pretty much fend for himself.

Siler is not a spoiled man. He just happens to know how dining room service should be handled and he does not think it is being handled right in Virginia Beach - or anywhere else today, for that matter.

The 86 year old Siler should know. He has served as waiter and Headwaiter in some of the East's classiest hotels in years gone by and was with the dining roomcrew that opened the old Cavalier in Virginia Beach in 1927.

He was headwaiter in the grill room at the Cavalier when it opened and in a couple of months became headwaiter of the entire dining area.

He served as headwaiter at the Cavalier until mid-1940's when management changed and he did not feel enough emphasis was being placed on food service.

He worked as headwaiter in other beach establishments until the early 1960's. That is when he decided to call it quits, more as a matter of frustration over modern day service techniques than the fact he was tired of the business.

"I've been to the new Cavalier a few times." Said Siler, who lives on Rosemont Road. "I didn't like it. I had to do everything myself; cut my meat, carve my chicken. I wasn't used to that.

"I used to go out and eat, but not much anymore. I've been to most all of the hotels around here and had a meal to see what was going on - what kind of service they were putting on.

Siler did not like what he saw and did not like what he ate.

"I don't like it at all", said Siler "most of these hotels don't have good cooks. Just someone who can throw something together."

How was it in Siler's days ?

"As headwaiter, I wore tails for breakfast, street clothes for lunch and tuxedo for dinner", recalled Siler.

That was only the window dressing.

Siler continued, "The meals were the best you ever seen - good meals. After I became headwaiter, I only allowed a waiter to have six people - four at one table and two at another.

"They would pour your coffee, put cream and sugar in it and stir it for you. They would put syrup on your hot cakes or waffle. They would carve your steak, they would carve your chicken or your turkey.

Photo by Brooks

Nixon Arrives for Beach Holiday

Richard C. Nixon (Second From Left) Enters the Cavalier Hotel at Virginia Beach as He's Interviewed on the Run by Ledger-Star Reporter Charlton Harrell. At Far Left Is Cavalier Owner Sidney Banks. At Right, Is Gordon Shreman General Manager of the Hotel

Breakfast (Con't)

Siler continued, "The meals were the best you ever seen - good meals. After I became headwaiter, I only allowed a waiter to have six people - four at one table and two at another."

"They would pour your coffee, put cream and sugar in it for you. They would put syrup on your hot cakes or waffle. They would carve your steak. They would carve your chicken or your turkey.

"You did'nt have to do anything but sit there with your fork and eat."

Today, anyone who can carry a plate from the kitchen to the dinning room can be a waiter or waitress. Not in Siler's day, and at the places where Siler worked.

"You had to be a good waiter in those hotels", said Siler, "They did'nt just hire anybody."

Siler actually started out in the hotel restaurant business as a cook.

"I was born in 1880 in Murphy, N.C., right in the mountains, and I cooked in three different hotels, two in Andrews, N.C., and one in Waynesville, N.C.. That was in 1906."

Siler got out of the kitchen and into the dining room as a waiter in Waynesville because he was missing out on the day's biggest event by being chained to the range.

"I couldn't get out of the kitchen to meet the trains", said Siler, recalling that the meeting of the trains going through Waynesville and something the whole town turned out to view.

"Everyone met the trains", said Siler. "Black and white, rain or shine, they went down there and sat on a hill and watched those trains meet. They would come through at 4:30 in the afternoon -- one to Asheville and the other to Murphy.

"That's all there was to do. They liked to see those trains go by to look to see who got on them and who got off."

Siler bounced around hotel restaurants in North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky before winding up in West Baden Springs, Ind.

Siler remembers West Baden well well because it was where he waited on his first celebrity - of sorts.

"It was Harry K. Thaw, the millionaire who killed a man in New York". He was put in an asylum and he broke out. I waited on him in West Baden. He came late one night - all the other waiters had gone to their quarters and I was the only one left.

"He came in with his chaffeur and I waited on them. The next morning, they came in for breakfast and I waited on them again."

Breakfast (Con't)

When he left he gave me a $10.00 bill".

That night, Siler said Thaw was captured.

The $10.00 tip from Thaw was the biggest tip Siler had received since he started workingas a waiter. But the biggest tip of his career came at the Cavalier from a man who stayed from friday to monday and requested Siler's services at his table.

"He gave me a $50 bill, and then on sunday he gave me a $20 and a $5 bill." "I never did remember that man's name, said Siler.

While at West Baden, the army beckoned Siler for World War I and he returned to Louisville, Ky., where he was inducted.

"I cooked for all the officers - The big officers, I mean - the generals and all that. I had three cooks under me, I was the head cook."

Siler said he tried to get overseas duty, but was told; "You cook too good. you stay here and take care of these."

After the war, Siler worked in Battle Creek, Mich., three years, Akron, Ohio, and for a short time in Dayton, Ohio.

He had an aunt living in Norfolk and he wrote her to find out if there were any big hotels in Norfolk. She wrote back and mentioned the Monticello Hotel. Siler caught the train for Norfolk.

On his arrival in Norfolk, his aunt told him she thought the Monticello was too classy a hotel for him to be a waiter. Siler got a job at the Monticello, worked there three years and then left for a new restaurant - The Washington Duke in Durham, N.C.

"I had worked at bigger and better and better places and all of them were 'a la carte", said Siler.

While at the Washington Duke, Siler waited on a man who remembered him from his days as a waiter in Akron.

"He was a man who went around and opened up these hotels, and he gave me a job as headwaiter.", said Siler.

Siler spent the next few years going around North Carolina, opening up hotels and setting up their dining facilities.

Meanwhile, Siler had married in North Carolina, and while he remained in that state, his wife came to Virginia Beach to teach school.

"We did'nt tell anybody", said Siler. "they did'nt allow teachers to be married then".

Siler left the hotel restaurant business in North Carolina to come to Virginia Beach to be with his wife the same summer the Cavalier was opening.

Breakfast (Con't)

"The headwaiter in Norfolk (from the old Monticello) told me he was going to the Cavalier and he wanted me to come with him and be the headwaiter in the ala carte service in the grill room. No one around here knew about ala carte. It was all america service.

Siler accepted the offer, and soon found himself running the whole show. The headwaiter quit that labor day, and through a series of circumstances, Siler became headwaiter of the whole operation at the Cavalier in the summer of 1928.

Back in those days there was'nt much at Virginia Beach. Siler remembers there was fuel feed at its same location at 19th. St. There was the train depot and there was the Cavalier - the premier hotel of the area. At that time.

Siler said the Cavalier did a good business in those early years, despite the fact it was away from the hub of activity in Norfolk.

"Lots of people came down from New York and Canada. In the early spring we filled up with people from Canada. Ducking that weather up there", said Siler.

Siler found, however, that he was having a problem keeping good, experienced waiters because of competition from other resort areas, such as Atlantic City, N.J.

"I would loose waiters to Atlantic City as soon as their season opened", said Siler.

Siler went to management with a suggestion.

"I suggested hiring the local country boys and training them", said Siler. "I got 20 of them and taught them and made them all buy a home - to keep them here.

"I would build them up and keep them here right under my finger. I made them good waiters and some of them are still there today, like Tom Fentress and Carlos Wilson. Filmore Reed retired last year."

Back then, the waiters in the better places were black men - no women.

"They were all black waiters because white people did'nt call that a job", said Siler. "Men were better at it than women, men would do the work women would'nt do, like cleaning up the dining room, setting things up, cleaning silver ...

Women did'nt work like that then. And those trays were heavy too. They were too heavy for women.

"It did'nt pay nothing, thirty dollars a month was all waiters were getting.... I think I was getting something like $92 or $93 dollars a month."

Breakfast (con't)

The waiters weren't Siler's only responsibility. The food came under his balliwick as well.

"Part of my job was seeing that things were cooked right, said Siler. "If it got into the dining room not cooked right, I took it back to the chef".

Siler said his assessment of the food coming out of the kitchen did not present a problem with the chef because:

"He worked with me. He had to work with me. If he did'nt I'd tell the manager and he would give him the devil."

Siler still has an old work order, dated Nov. 30, 1938, which he displayed to show the fare offered that day.

The menu was: Fruit coctail, celery hearts, imported olives, cream of asparagus, aux croutons, broiled filet mignon with mushroom sauce, peas and carrots in butter, potatoes au gratin, lettuce and tomato salad with french dressing, biscuit tortoni and demitasse.

"That would cost you about $2.00, said Siler. The changing times and the changing management of the early and mid 1940's finally go to Siler and he quit the Cavalier.

"They had these banquets and men would come there and leave their wives home and just get drunk,"said Siler, "that was one of the reasons I left."

The other reason was when a new manager took over and brought in a maitre de hotel to run the dining room.

"The new manager came to the Cavalier, and seeing me being a negro, he did'nt want to see me handling all that". said Siler. "He wanted a maitre d' he brought in an Italian as maitre d'. He was over me."

Siler said the maitre d' hotel started changing the serving techniques of the Cavalier.

"He wanted everything brought out of the kitchen on one plate.", said Siler. "It just tore me all to pieces."

"Before you ordered a steak and it came out on silver platter-covered. The waiter would show you the steak, and if you liked it, he would put it aside and cut it up for you.

They, (the customers) liked it. They would like it yet, but the maitre d' came in and it was like serving a bunch of hogs - like horses.

Siler thinks the maitre d' hotels have ruined todays service in the classier eating places and he does not look for a return of yesteryear's service any time soon. "It's a thing of the past, I think, said Siler. "Unless somebody opens up a hotel and wants that kind of service again, I don't think you will see it." Would Siler be willing to come back out of retirement. "I don't think so it's just too much.

The Ledger Star (Leisure Time Section)

THE DAILY BREAK Wed. June 24, 1981

QUEEN OF THE BEACH

Grand old Cavalier gets a face lift.
By: William Ruehlmann

VIRGINIA BEACH - On April 9, 1927, Miss J. Gosselini of Quebec was charged with assaulting a priest who requested her to leave during a euchre party. Twenty-one members of the British Parliament demanded the release of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. President Nicolas Murray of Columbia University warned that prohibition repeal "Would be a return to the old "Saloon."

And the Cavalier Hotel opened it's doors to paying guests.

They called her the Queen of the Beach. Gov. Harry Flood Byrd said,"Virginia has the best resort hotel in America." The eight stories of red brick and steel atop a tall sand dune, built in 13 months at a cost of two million dollars, boasted 226 rooms, a barber shop, a confectionery, hot and cold taps in every sink with an extra spiqot for ice water, perma-kote washable wallpaper, china service in the restaurant showing the planting of the first cross on Virginia soil, silk demansk hangings in the ballroom, a 75 by 25 heated, salt-water swimming pool and the easy-listening dance music of Ben Bernie and his orchestra.

"In the construction of the building." In its furnishings and operation, and in all the details of the landscaping, there has been manifest an effort to embody the spirit of old Virginia.

Georgeous it was, but a step short of heaven. No negroes or jews allowed, except as help. The rooms, a cramped 12 by 12, were well-appointedcells; Coming down for breakfast one morning, Will Rogers said of the man who did in builder Sanford White. "Harry K. Thaw killed the wrong architect."

Still the smart set came, writer F. Scott Fitzgerald and his wife Zelda were regulars. Fatty Arbuckle rented an entire floor. Sam Snead won the Virginia Open here. Snooky Lanson of "Your Hit Parade." performed and comedian Victor Borge cracked Wise:

The management has asked me to request that you put the shower curtains inside the bath before taking a shower." pause. "you know, it took me 25 minutes to get my curtains off those little rings so I could get them in the tub."

Imagine tooling up in a chauffer-driven limosine, rosebuds resting in the flower holders, your old spats crossed comfortably in the cab, shoes black as onyx at midnight. The doorman greets you ,takes the suitcases (No luggage in those days, just willing fists.)

Queen of the Beach (Con't)

pause. "You know, it took me 25 minutes to get my curtains off those little rings so I could get them in the tub."

Imagine tooling up in a chauffer - driven limosine, rosebuds resting in the flower holders, your old spats crossed comfortably in the cab, shoes black as onyx at midnight. The doorman greets you, takes the suitcases (No luggage carriers in those days, just willing fists.) you step out and look up.

Above the rolling green rises the Cavalier, three wings, designed to afford every guest a view. Pink windowed. Wonderful, but only your due.

The bellmen take your luggage up; you tip, lavishly of course (This is revery) and you part the curtains in your room and gaze out, past the tennis courts with the players in white ducks and the saffron sand stretching away to the water.

It is a picture postcard world.

Some who were there remember.

Joseph Walton, 70, busboy:

"It was just elegant. We had rich people coming, with the Rolls -Royaces and the essexes, cars they don't even make anymore. Jean Harlow was a guest here and Bette Davis.

"It was the black waiters that made this place famous. They gave service; those waiters were always on the ball. We served tea and cinnamon toast by the pool and could pick up 25, 30 cents an evening, which was a good thing then.

The rates were $10 a day and you got breakfast, lunch and dinner. I made $6 a week; I got paid $12 every two weeks, no social security, no taxes taken out, no check - just money.

"Those other places you see on the strip? listen, The Cavalier is Virginia Beach. The rest are . . . motels."

Thomas Fentress, 70, waiter:

"I first came here in a model T Ford in 1928. I got a job in the dinning room. It was really elaborate in those days; we had water bottles with silver handles on them."

Everything was french silver service. Even the eggs would come on a platter. Judy Garland came, and (actor) John Boles; Mrs. (Franklin) Roosevelt, she even came, and brought the girl scouts with her.

"Folks were neatly attired, even in the morning. You did'nt have nothing in those days but ladies and gentlemen. They were, according to the time, more generous. People would give you then what they give you now.

"The food was different. You had full meals every meal, no sandwiches like we got now. I have served baked Alaska to 10 & 12 people; you don't see many of those today.

Queen of the Beach (Con't)

"Things have gotten more loose, more modern. With the children and all. The language now sometimes really amazes you.

"Wrong - way Corrigan came here. He sort of surprised me. Short guy, talk to anybody. Go on all the time."

Billy Morris, 68, band leader:

I first played the Cavalier in 1939. They were the good old days, yes sir. Dancing was very popular then. I liked a smooth style of music, society stuff - Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin.

"I used to get more applause than I do now.

"You could always tell the people who had money. They'd fold it up so small and stick it in your hand. In those days, the women loved to get into that long dress.

"Tommy Newsome (of the tonight show with Johnny Carson) used to play in my band at the old Cavalier. Helluva nice fellow. I met Georgie Jessel and Frances Langford; Arthur Murray and his wife were there. Boy, they were good dancers."

Leah Jaffe, 72, the first Miss Virginia:

"My mother didn't want me to enter the thing. In those days, it wasn't the most elegant thing to do. But that contest was the highlight of the hotel opening."

"It was devine."

"Today the Miss Virginia Contest at the Roanoke Hotel goes on for several days. They judge on beauty, poise, charm and talent. In my day, there strictly concerned with figure - they weren't interested in talent or anything like that.

"They played Valencia," I can hear it now. The Tea Dances were beautiful - everybody looked like fashion plates.

"It's a pity how time takes it's toll."

Carlos Wilson, 60, bar manager:

"I started as a bus boy here when I was only 15 years old. I did'nt even have a social security card; I had to walk to the Norfolk Post Office to get one."

"I served Arthur Godfrey, I worked with Mr. (Richard) Nixon; he was as nice as he could be. Mr. (Hubert) Humphrey was just the same.

"(Prime Minister) Mackenzie King from Canada rented the whole sixth floor. He had all his valets, maids and nurses with him. We used to sit back together and watch the birds.

Queen of the Beach (Con't).

"It was a great hotel. If you didn't have a reservation, you did'nt come in, no matter how much money you had. There were fresh cut flowers on the tables every morning. In those days, did'nt have no air conditioning - but you wore tuxedoes and evening gowns in the dining room.

"During the war, they had german soldiers here cleaning up the grounds. The Navy took over, and when they were done, there were holes in all the walls and around the swimming pool. They really did mess it up terrible, and that's the truth. We could'nt even find the silverware when we came back."

When World War Two started, the Cavalier became a radio school. It would never regain its former grandeur. The cabanas at the beach club became harder to fill. In 1973 the old Cavalier-on-the-hill was closed and attentions turned to the new Cavalier-on-the-ocean-front near the water.

As vandals and wild trancients roamed the Cavalier's empty halls from kitchen to cupola, there was talk of plans to turn the place into an old folk's home. Some said it should be torn down for condominiums. Economic studies agreed on one thing: It was not feasible to reopen the Cavalier as a hotel.

Then Gene Dixon, Jr. president of the Kyanite Mining Company and son of the Cavalier's former owner, took control, determining that the queen of the beach, against all conventional opinion, should be refurbished and put back in business.

"It appeared to me," said Dixon, 38, in town for a board meeting, "that in the long run the hotel building could be saved and it should be. It seems to me that it would be more valuable than anything we could replace it with."

Dixon's grandmother Clara, 88, encouraged him to return the hotel to the way it had been before the war. Dixon insists the project is not entirely sentimental; he is not saving a white elephant. He expects it to make money.

"The original hotel can stand against anything placed at that location in today's market," Dixon said. "We consider both (the old and the new) buildings as one business property; One does not carry the other."

So for six years Dixon's brother-in-law, decorator Boyd Colegate, 55, has been laboring as Executive Vice President of the Cavalier, personally supervising a projected 3.5 million renovation effort. He knocked walls out of many of the rooms to make them larger reducing their number to 126. He re-plastered and refurnished.

Colegate expects to have the job complete next year with the redoing of the old hotel's olympic, lion studded pool.

" What we have done", Colegate said, "is kind of a miracle, because we've done it all ourselves; we haven't used any outside contractors - we did it all internally.

"When we started, the Beach Club was a disaster.

Queen of the beach (Con't)

Plastering hung off the paneling in the lobby. Kidds were all over the place. It would have made you cry to go into the Hunt Room and see the furniture smashed, the holes in the ceiling."

"But we have spent in excess of "2 million cash, and there is no indebtedness of this hotel at all."

The old Cavalier opened on a limited basis in 1976; now rooms are available there for guests and conventions year round. The Beach Club is completely restored, providing the only outdoor dance floor on the east coast once again. A sauna and health spa will be installed at the old hotel." There are also plans for a walkway over Atlantic Avenue and a chapel. Colegates deadline for completion is Christmas 1982.

"We know it will pay." He said. "We've put money into this thing to the point that there's no backing out now, and it's producing already.

"Everybody told us were crazy to do this, but they all come out to enjoy it."

On the 18th of July (The Saturday Nights Gull Moon) nostalgia night will take place at the Beach Club, with starlight dancing, long gowns and the Billy Morris Orchestra. Throughout the summer at the old Cavalier, dinner theatre will play nightly in the Pocahontas Room; 150 people a sitting can eat buffet style and see "California Suite," "Butterflies are free", and "Same Time, Next Year" in repertory.

That theatre has been established by two local actors, Mark Thomas, 42, who managed The Cavalier Dinner Playhouse in Norfolk for seven years, and Glenn Graham, 35, a former soap opera performer on ABC -TV'S "One Life To Live."

"We haven't picked sex shows like "Natalies Nightie, Graham said, "Nor have we gone for Tennessee Williams, either . These plays are just good theatre. If we're not successful at this location, we wouldn't be anywhere on the oceanfront."

"Here," Thomas added, "We have the reputation and stability of a well - known landmark."

The partners take a dim view of City Councils recently levied "Virginia Beach Dinner Theatre tax of 14 percent on a $20 ticket, effective the day they opened.

It has been a long time since waiters, dressed in knee britches and stiff collars, sang spirituals in the lobby Sunday nights, when $18 a day for two included meals and booze was brown-bagged to the Beach Club.

Now, summers, a double room goes for $69, food extra.

Queen of the Beach (Con't)

The Cavalier was named after the group of colonial settlers who came to Virginia Beach in the midd - 1600's. Latter day colonials kept - coming, and once it hummed with card parties, golf tourneys, saddle horses, "Hospitality", the management proclaimed, "Is a heritage." Tennis players wore white linen, no jeans, no shorts.

Rudy Vallee performed, Guy Lombardo, the Dorseys.

Bathing suits still had sleeves.

"People were nicer then," Carlos Wilson observed. "They always had time to talk. Today, I don't know whether it's the economy or what, but they just don't have the time."

It was the very illusion of leisure, and after 54 years and the long attentions of a staff moving over it like earnest bees shoring up a sagging honeycomb, it still is.

The Glen Miller Orchestra played here last winter four days before Christmas; 500 people came. Long live the Queen.

Virginia Beach Sun, May 24, 1988.

ON THE STREET - By Bill Reed

WILSON NOT READY TO CLOSE DOOR ON CAREER

To the rich and famous and the not-so-rich-and-famous who have walked into the marbled foyer over the past 50 years, Bell Captain Carlos Wilson was and is the Cavalier Hotel.

The list of luminaries who have entered it's doors since it opened in 1927 include humorist Will Rogers, author F. Scott Fitzgerald and movie stars Fatty Arbuckle, Jean Harlow and Judy Garland.

From the political realm, Eleanor Roosevelt, Richard M. Nixon and Hubert Humphrey have signed the register.

"An estimated 5,390,000 people have passed through these doors, and Carlos Wilson greeted a good portion of them", said John Hendricksen, General Manager of the hotel.

Wilson has been around since 1937, when he joined the staff as a wide-eyed and eager 16 year old, earning 25¢ an hour at the end of the depression.

Last Friday, the hotel's owner, administrators, employees and longtime friends like the Rev. S.L. Scott, pastor of Union Babtist Church, gathered 200 strong in the Ballroom of the Old Cavalier to celebrate wilson's half century of service.

Hendriksen, who organized the surprise reception, complete with a two-trumpet escort and a layer - cake replica of the Cavalier, summed up Wilson's contributions.

"He possesses two sterling qualities: An ability to smile and a genuine affection for people.", said Hendriksen. "Many hundreds of employees remember you. We thank you for you have left a little part of yourself with all of us."

There were amens, of sorts, from former employees like Bobby Dozier, who worked as a bellhop between college terms under Wilson's kind but firm hand, and from Joseph L. Lyle, Jr., who ran the Cavalier's tennis courts in the 1950's and is now a lawyer for the hotel.

"More than any one person, Carlos Wilson epitomizes the graciousness and the ambience that is the Cavalier Hotel," Lyle said.

While Wilson is well known as the friendly face of the Cavalier, friends like Ray Adams say the Bell Captain's influence extends well beyond the walls of either the old hotel or the new hotel, where Wilson also works.

"He has helped a lot of young men and women through college," said Adams at the friday gathering. "three of my children were helped through college by Carlos Wilson.

Wilson not ready (Con't)

Wilson, now 66 gray and portly, rose at last to say a few words of his own. "It doesn't seem to me It's been 50 years", he said. "I just get up in the morning and go to work. I want you to know, as long as I'm able to move around, I'll be here, because It's like a home to me.

When the speechmaking was over Wilson was surrounded by men and women, old and young, mostly employees past and present, who shook his hand or embraced him, and invariably thanked him for some act of kindness or sound piece of advise offered in the course of an ordinary working day.

"My biggest hobby in life is to make people happy," he said later. "It makes me feel good. I tell these young people it does'nt cost anything to be nice - It pays off in the long run."

Wilson was born in Accomack County on the Eastern Shore, then moved with his family to Princess Anne County, where his mother became the first black public schoolteacher.

He married and had two children, both of whom were sent through college, he proclaims proudly. One daughter died in 1969. The surviving daughter is an english teacher at Green Run High School and is working on her doctorate with plans to teach at the college level. Her daughter, now 19, is attending St. Augustine's College in Raleigh, N.C..

It is another generation started on the right path, in Carlos Wilson's scheme of things.

The Virginian-Pilot, 1974.

THIRTY SIX YEARS OF CLASS

A touch of graciousness from another era at the Old Cavalier lingers on at the new Cavalier oceanfront in the person of Carlos Wilson, shown right in front of the old hotel. Today, Focus travels with him in memory through the stately old building.

BY: SUZANNE HOLDEN
Beacon Feature Editor

The smile. That's the first thing you notice about Carlos Wilson.

It's a wide and happy smile. It shows his genuine liking for people.

That smile is as important to the way people see Carlos Wilson as his big gentle-looking hands, his graying , curly hair or the very clothes on his back.

It has taken him into his 36th year with the Cavalier Hotels - First the fine old building on the hill off Pacific Avenue and now the contemporary structure which is the Cavalier Oceanfront. He is both manager of the bar department and director of services (Bell Stand) at the new hotel.

Thirty Six years. Wilson lets go a low drawn out whistle when he thinks back to the beginning.

"I remember a lot but I've been here so long, Iv'e forgotten half of what I know." He'll tell you with a chuckle that seems to come from his toes.

"The first Social Security card I ever got when I was working right over there! I didn't even know what Social Security was.", he said. Wilson was 15 years old and he remembers riding the train into Norfolk to get his card.

He started out as a yard man. He mowed the grass, weeded flower beds and the like.

"The old Cavalier was a society hotel into the 60's. It catered to what your mother always told you were the best people."

A few years after Wilson got on at the hotel, he graduated to dining room service. He came to know Admirals and polititions, famous band leaders and governors, at least one prime minister, MacKenzie of Canada. Getting Wilson to serve you was a privilege reserved for the mighty.

He still blesses his coach, headwaiter C.I. Siler, "one of the greatest dining room men there has ever been," He remains convinced. Wilson was Siler's Captain.

" I used to admire that C.I. Siler", said Wilson. "When he'd walk iinto that dining room on sunday morning in his tail coat and striped pants, he was one good looking man."

Thirty-Six Years (Con't)

Oh, yes, the waiters dressed as well as the guests.

"You could'nt just walk into the Cavalier off the street in any old clothes like a lot of people do today", he said.

"The Head Waiter would'nt let you in.

"No, sir. In those days people dressed! They'd come through that lobby - and we had music there in those days - the ladies in their evening dresses, men in their tuxedos, LOOKING GOOD. And we didn't even have air conditioning then."

There was a deliberate personal touch to the serving too, said Wilson. When a couple or a party checked in for a vacation stay, they were assigned to a specific table to which they returned for all meals.

"They had the same waiter the entire time they were in the hotel and he got to know how they liked things so he could give them the best service," said Wilson.

Through the years of work in the kitchen, as a bellman, in the housekeeping department, the dining room and now the Bar Department, Wilson said, "Iv'e enjoyed every minute of it.

"People mean something to me. I love being around 'em."

His mother was a teacher and Wilson said she told him once, "I wish I could get along with people like you do."

His response was, "It's because I love people, mana." To me, he added, "And it doesn't cost anthing to be nice."

How does the New Cavalier compare with the old ?

"This is a nice hotel here. I like it. But over there the old Cavalier is one of the greatest (nodding across Pacific Avenue towards hotels ever built on the east coast).

"It was a city within itself. It had anything you needed. There were doctors on call if anyone got sick, a drug store, a sauna and pool, excellent service and, of course, food and entertainment."

The old hotel is being refurbished to Wilson's great delight.

"If things go well, we'll have that open sometime in June." He said.

He laughed at himself as he said that during his annual winter vacation he'd often tell his wife Annie, "Think I'll ride down and see how things are going at the hotel." She always knew he meant nothing but the old Cavalier.

Thirty-Six Years (Con't)

And he has a built-in empathy for the passerby who stop to investigate the activity, peep in the front door and say things such as, oh, look. They're fixing it up again. I spent my honeymoon here and I'd love to come back."

"People have been concerned about the rumor that it was going to be torn down," said Wilson, shaking his head that any such notion could get around.

"You ought to see that lobby,"he told me. It's beautiful . . . Grand as it ever was." It first opened in 1928 (Error - the hotel opened in 1927) and Wilson went to work there in 1938.

Obviously the heart is there, right?
I'll tell you, he answered, "when you work somewhere as long as that, it feels like home."

Wilson left the cavalier in 1941, and worked at the Naval Shipyard in Portsmouth until the war ended.

After the war he returned as dining room Captain, but soon became manager of The Hunt Room.

It was in the Hunt Room one evening several years ago that a fellow guest who purported to know Wilson well told me that his salary was in the $30,000 range and that he was heavily into the stock market.

I asked him about it. "True, he told you the truth." and with a wry chuckle, "but we wont talk about that.

And then he did talk about it. He started investing in stocks to educate his two daughters, both of whom were graduated as teachers from St. Augustine College, Raleigh, N.C.

"But I did so well at the hotel, I did'nt have to go into my stocks. That's what I'm going to retire on."

Wilson's sideline is catering, the vocation of which he is a master. He calls it "helping out my friends.", and he's talking about some of tidewaters most prominent, well fixed families.

Recreation? Is there such a thing for such a busy man? "Im strictly a chruch man," said Wilson. He is a member of Union Baptist Church on south boulevard, which can be seen from the toll road just past the Independence Boulevard exit. The old frame church was recently refurbished inside and out, It's exterior covered with a handsome new brick facade.

"I got religion at that church when I was 11 years old, Wilson said.

Now he is chairman of the board of deacons and treasurer.

Thirty-Six years (Con't)

Thats where he takes his two little grandaughters, on whom he dotes, to sunday school and church. "I love 'em, oh, how I love them." he said of his grandbabies, as he refers to them.

So this is Carlos Wilson, a happy man, close to his God, devoted to family, righ in friendships, active into a fourth decade in a vocation satisfying both materially and mentally.

RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH, May 7, 1978

RE-OPENING OF GRAND OLD LADY MEANS REVIVAL OF YESTERYEAR.

The old hotel is closed, awaiting an uncertain future, the front door is boarded. The lobby is littered with trash, beer bottles and plaster fallen from the ceiling. The air is musty. a youngster has come between the grand old lady and the ocean. There is a modern hotel on the beach. Even it's name is modern: The Cavalier Hotel - Times Dispatch, Aug. 12th.

By: Wilford Kale
Times Dispatch State Staff.

VIRGINIA BEACH - "I love that old hotel," Carlos Wilson said as he looked up at the grand hotel on the hill. "I've been here since 1938 and have loved every God's minute of it.

"You better believe I'm happy. I'm a happy man! when this old hotel closed," he said, walking up to the big front doors, "I just sort of cried, she had been my life."

"My wife told me one day, Carlos, I think you love that old hotel more than me. I did'nt argue much with her, I'm afraid," he said, "because I do love this hotel."

"I would rather see this place back open more than anything else in the world and that's the God's truth."

LAST WEEK the old Cavalier Hotel, that first opened in 1927 and attracted the wealthiest clientel in the last years of the roaring 20's and those following the depression and World War 11 was open for business.

The old building had fallen into decay in the early 1970's and began losing money. The owners thought it's years were past and agreed to construct a new $5 million Hotel on the beachfront and named it the New Cavalier Hotel.

The old building was nearly as good as new. The interior, however, was not new. It had not been maintained and appeared worn. It badly needed renovations and remodeling. The newer and modern motor hotels had passed it by.

There were those persons, however, including Wilson, who just hated to see the Old Cavalier close, because it meant the end of an era.

TODAY, HOWEVER, a part of It's bygone days has been recaptured in the renovation program by the owner, the Kyanite Mining Corp. of Dillyn, began three years ago. In 1976, a total of 32 rooms in the massive building were again opened to the public. Last year the total bedrooms was 51.

Now there are 82 remodeled and redecorated rooms available and three of the public rooms, including the famous Hunt room, are back in service.

GRAND OLD LADY (Con't) RE-OPENING.

John W. Hendriksen, President - Manager, said that hopefully by next year "Virtually all of the rooms will be openalong with the larger indoor pool."

In it's heyday, The Cavalier Hotel played host to guests who wore fancy gowns and black tie attaire to dinner. They danced in the nearby Cavalier Beach and Cabana Club on the ocean front to the music of Les Brown, Sammy Kaye and Benny Goodman.

Carlos Wilson remembers much of that. As he walked through the newly refurbished lobby that shined almost like new, he said, "I love this building. It's just like being at home."

HE BEGAN WORKING at the hotel in 1938 as a yardman and later moved to the engine room, to housekeeping, to the dining room as a waiter, captain and bartender.

Now he's bartender and director of services for both hotels, "But my heart is right here," he said, standing in the Raleigh Room - a redecorated public room off the lobby and outside the old dining room.

"Let me see if I can open the dining room for you. You gotta see that room - That's where the hotel made it's reputation."

The dining room has not been renovated and stands cluttered and worn, like the rest of the building must have looked before renovation. Paint was pealing from the ceiling and plaster falling from some of the ornate cornace work.

WILSON LAPSED into nostalgia - lost in another world.

"Old C.I. Siler was the head waiter and I mean head Waiter," Wilson recalled, "He ran this place. You did'nt do anything out of line. He worked from that big table over in the corner. He never left it, but he ran the whole dining room from it."

"He demanded everything go right. We had fresh flowers on the table every day. They came from the garden just outside that door."

"We had people who used to come here year after year and they wanted their same waiters. These people wanted service and we gave it to them. We had only three tables each. My tables were 46, 47, and 38, over in that corner. I had two duces and a four. That was all we could handle."

"I TOLD YOU about our service, did'nt I ?"

" On Sunday mornings at breakfast, all the waiters wore tails, Hickory - striped pants and white gloves. You could'nt get in here unless you had a reservation. It was beautiful and that's the God's truth."

Reality struck him hard as he looked at the fading paint and worn carpet.

RE - OPENING (Con't)

"It's hard to believe what I'm telling you, is'nt it ? But this was a wonderful place. I can't wait until it's cleaned up and re-opened. I'm gonna come in here and have dinner that very first day."

At least three of the floors have been redecorated and the rooms enlarged. There used to be 36 rooms per floor, most of them small, like state rooms. Now there are only 18 or 19 rooms per floor with the rooms twice the size and some open into three and four room suites.

"The cedar - lined closets are still there and "see these bath-room fixtures have been left, just like the old days, you can't buy one of these things anymore." he added turning a 1927 vintage cold water spigot.

SOME ROOMS overlook a beach that has built up with new hotels that block the once-majestic view of the ocean. Others overlook what was once a beautiful garden and a few still overlook the back kitchen door. "But these rooms got feelings," Wilson said.

The Hunt Room, downstairs, was where Wilson worked as manager when the old hotel closed it's doors in October 1973. "It's the same room as before only It's been enlarged a little. The big fireplace is still here," he explained.

"Years ago, all a person in Virginia Beach had to do to find somebody after work was to come up here to the hunt room. All the City's business was conducted right here."

He leaned on the bar and stared off into the room. "I educated both my daughters working right in this room. I never regret one minute of it," Wilson said.

IT WAS RAINING when he left the old hotel.

"I remember the trains", he said pausing for a moment. "They used to run right in front at the foot of the hill right on Pacific Avenue the pullman cars used to stop. We had to walk down to get the luggage and carry them back up the hill, rain or shine.

In those days, the hotel used to have it's own golf course, riding stables and skeet range along with the railroad stop.

All that's gone now, except in the memory of Wilson and for these persons who now will be able to return to the old Cavalier, sit in the refurbished Raleigh Room and talk about yesteryear as though it were yesterday.

GENERATIONS OF BEACH TOURISTS SERVED BY CAVALIER HEADWAITER.

THE VIRGINIA BEACH SUN, 1-17-79.

By: Pam Vandeveer, Virginia Beach Sun Editor.

Riding horses and stables, a sunken garden, tea served on the terrace by the pool- all are fond memories for Thomas Fentress, headwaiter at Virginia Beach's Cavalier Hotel.

Fentress, 67, began working at the Cavalier in 1929. Of course times have changed considerably and he has adapted. But a chat with this man, whose portrait today hangs at the entrance to the Cavalier's Sand Dollar Room, is good for a few good tales about tourism at the beach over the years.

"Back in the 30's the Cavalier had horses and stables for people who stayed," Fentress recalls. "There was a beautiful sunken garden with all kinds of flowers and the guests would lounge around."

"Lunch was served from 12 to 2:30. Afterwards we would serve tea on the terrace or by the pool from 4 til 6. That died out around 1937, I guess."

"Of course everything was much more formal. It was formal dress for dinner. We served three meals a day, and everything was served on platters - - even your bacon and eggs."

Fentress said World War II was responsible for many changes in customs at the hotel. The Navy actually took over the Cavalier during the war, 1942-45.

The following years included the popular big band era and Fentress' eyes light up at the recollection.

"We had all the big name bands perform here like Louis Armstrong and Glenn Miller. It was beautiful to work some nights just to hear those bands. I used to love Glenn Miller.

"But thats all gone with the wind now. You don't hear anything like that here today. Sometimes we have a few pieces upstairs in the summer on special occasions."

Harry Taylor was a popular entertainer at the hotel during the 50's. "He used to go to the Hunt Room and tell stories and jokes until 1 or 2 in the morning. He and his wife would stay at the hotel a month or more. He gave me one of his records before he left. I have it at home somewhere.

"Things were really jumping there in the '50's, Fentress grinned.

The 60's ushered in the large conventions and the hiring of waitresses.

Generations (Con't)

"Up until then we had a staff of all black waiters" he explained. you had to go through an apprenticeship and you could'nt go in that dining room unless you were right."

"During the 60's they would hold luaus on the big lawn. That's when the waitresses started. They wore grass skirts and the men liked that", he smiled.

"Today the staff just isn't trained, someone comes in off the street and learns the job at the customers expense.

"Waiting on a table, used to be taken as a profession. You had to know the fine points - - the right silver, know what goes with what, know about wine.

"In the old days you served the different courses. The starter was maybe a shrimp cocktail, then came soup, then a fish course and finally the main course. People have forgotten about that kind of service."

Though Fentress says he enjoys working in the new building (located accross the street from the old Cavalier), he liked the old setting and view.

The old hotel was built in style, taste and comfort. Of course there used to be more land surrounding it.

There was plenty of space - - you'd look and see a house here or there.

We had cabanas on both sides of Atlantic Avenue that people would rent. We had a train line running through here. People would ride down from New York. "This was the place to be.!"

In spite of all the changes through the years, Fentress is still happy working at the Cavalier. This year saw the addition of an oil portrait of himself at the entrance to the restaurant.

And even though the beach is "much too crowded" he still loves the city. He and his wife Clara Virginia live at the beach.

"Things are just so fast now. I think I liked the old way", he said thoughtfully, "service was really good. People have gotten a lot more casual.

"Things are just so fast now. You see all kinds of people now -- you just run into everybody."

Thomas Fentress

The Virginian Pilot and Ledger Star, Jan. 22, 1989.

MINING FORTUNE BOUGHT GEM OF A HOTEL, By: Bill Morris, Staff Writer.

"The mineral is called Kyanite, and it made Gene Dixon Jr's father rich. It helps preserve the grandest dame of the Virginia Beach ocean front: The Cavalier Hotel."

DILLWYN, VA. -- "That", shouted Gene Dixon, Jr., pointing at a series of paddle wheels churning tanks of mud - brown water; is what bought the Cavalier Hotel!"

He was standing in Kyanite Mining Corp's "Mill House", a grimy thundering shed on the steep slopes of Willis Mountain more than 40 miles west of Richmond.

Here, half a million tons of rock are crushed every year so that kyanite - a bluish, heat - resistant crystal that was used in the heat shields of America's first spaceships - can be seperated, stored in massive drying silos, then shipped all over the world.

"If you shut that machine down and sold it for scrap metal" Dixon said of the paddle wheels and muddy tanks, "you could'nt get "75.oo".

But that primitive looking machine made Dixon's father Gene Dixon, Sr., a rich man. His fortune eventually bought the Cavalier on the hill. "The hotel that made Virginia Beach famous", and later built the Cavalier Oceanfront Hotel: and now, as much of the city races to go high rise and condo, it helps preserve the grandest dame on the oceanfront.

The Cavalier on the hill, built in 1927, is in the early stages of another face lift, a multimillion - dollar renovation that will take three years to complete.

It's one of several cosmetic surgeries the hotel has endured since the early years, when it accomodated the famed and fortuned. Reservations were required in those days for all guests, most of whom showed up in chauffered limousines.

Most likley the Cavalier on the hill would have gone the way of such other seaside dowagers as the Princess Anne Hotel and the Pocahontas by now - if Gene Dixon, Sr. and kyanite had'nt gotten together more than four decades ago.

Here in Buckingham County, gently lifting farmland, Gene Dixon Sr:s legend remains larger than life 15 years after his death.

There seems to be no end to the stories about the visionary from Galax who dropped out of school in the third grade, worked as a coal miner, ran a lumber mill, then with several bought a bankrupt quarry on nearby Baker Mountain in 1945.

Mining Fortune (Con't)

"He was sitting by the stove at a country store one day after working at the lumber mill", Gene, Jr. recalled. "Fifteen of them decided to get together and put up $55,000 for the property."

On Feb. 5, 1945, the partners, after nearly being outbid by a large New York mining concern, took over 275 acres on Baker mountain and about 150 acres on Willis Mountain. They all knew it was a gamble.

"They did'nt have any money, but Gene was a salesman", said Jake Gieseke, 79, a metallurgical engineer who's now a director and consultant for the company.

"He went out and met the customers and told them we were dependable".

Kyanites president was wearing corduroys and muddy boots, and he obviously relished touring his domain, pointing out the cogs of the operation - the original mill house, a new mill house, three partially completed mill and storage buildings, various pieces of heavy machinery.

As workers prepared to blast away another chunk of Willis Mountain he acknowledges that the quest for kyanite might ultimately cause 1,129 - foot - high Willis Mountain to be erased from the face of the earth.

Standing on the jagged top of the mountain, Dixon looked down at the rolling Virginia countryside. Much of it is carpeted with pine trees, part of the company's thriving tree-farming operation. from that vantage point, the future looks bright - both for the kyanit Mining Corp. and for the Cavalier Hotel.

Dixon said that when he was a teenager, his father discouraged visits to the Cavalier Hotel on the assumption that you cannot keep people at the mine once they have seen the big city. But Gene, Jr., who married a Texan named Barbara Sullivan, after attending nearby Hampden-Sidney College, has not been quite as strict with his three children.

"My teenage son worked at the Cavalier as a bellhop last summer," he said. "He thought the money fell out of the ceiling down there! He'd worked here at the mine, but let's just say He'd never experienced an activity where the rewards were so directly connected to that activity."

The boy's father, however, has.

He inherited, then greatly expanded, the largest kyanite mine in the world. Though there deposits of the mineral worldwide, the only other working mine is in Sweeden. South Africa produces a similar mineral called andalusite.

The Kyanite Minining Corp. owns a deposit in Canada, but Dixon does not expect to live to see it successfully mined. "I think one of my children or grandchildren might tackle the job.

Mining Fortune (Con't)

The mineral was known as long ago as Worlk War I, when it was used in airplane sparkplugs. But it Was'nt until the mid - 1950's, when Gene, Sr. realized the size of the veins on Willis Mountain, that the struggling operation took off.

Today the mineral, which can withstand temperatures up to 3000 degrees fahrenheit and is mined in only one other place in the world, is used in the making of steel and in a vast array of products on display in the company's offices. These include spark plugs, false teeth, air-craft brake linings, ceramic tiles, fire bricks, jet turbine molds and beer steins.

Gene Dixon, Sr. bought out his original 14 partners in 1948. A few years later, about the time the business started booming, a casually dressed Gene Dixon, Sr. strolled into the hotel one evening, according to one story. He was told, politely but firmly, that gentlemen were required to wear neckties in the dining room.

He said he did'nt have a necktie. Sorry, the head waiter said, but he would have to leave.

Turning on his heel, Dixon vowed to return one day and buy the hotel.

"I would say the chances of that story being true are high." said Gene Jr., a boyish grin spreading accross his face. "Daddy did'nt like neckties."

Gene Sr., ever true to his word came back and bought a one-fifth interest in the Cavalier in the late 1950's. Eventually he became a half owner, then in the early 1960's the sole owner. Today his son owns both hotels, though he spends most of his time overseeing the kyanite mine.

Gene Dixon, Sr. died at the age of 57 in 1974, shortly after the new hotel was completed. His son thinking the timing could not have been worse.

"It was difficult for him at the end of his life to accept that the hotel was not successful! He said of the great hotel oceanfront. "It was a great trajedy daddy did'nt get to see that hotel become profitable."

There had been some lean times , times that might have inspired less determined - or less stubborn - men to cut their losses and get out.

Everyone would want the Cavalier Hotel now", Gene Jr. said, "But old hotels were not pleasures to owners in the 50's and 60's - especially not to the owner of the Cavalier. But daddy said, "I'm going to stay with it. I'm not going to take the easy way out! he did what he did with the mining business - He just made it run until morning."

Dixon can remember months in the off season when the old hotel's total income was $400 a month.

Mining Fortune (Con't)

There was talk of turning it into a rest home, of selling it and replacing it with condos, but the deeper he got into it, the deeper he wanted to go.

As Gene, Jr. puts it now, "Daddy found out that owning half of it was just 2½ times as bad as owning 20 percent of it. The only way to cure that was to own all of it."

Owning all of it did not prove to be an unvarnished joy.

"It was no fun down there when my father died - 1973 was a depression year," Gene, Jr. said. "It was taking a lot of money to stay in business back then but we've stayed with it this long, and now we're over the hump."

As he bounced around Willis Mountain in a four-wheel-drive pickup. Dixon looked like anything but a multimillionaire mining tycoon. At 45, he has cold black hair with glints of silver, but his face remains boyish, his laugh quick and high.

He was dressed in a flannel shirt and boots. The rock was being hauled down to the mill house for crushing and seperating. Dixon refused to speculate on how long the mountain might continue to yield the precious blue crystals. "That gets you into all kinds of trouble," he said.

Instead he told a story of riding a horse along the eastern ridge of the mountain when he was a boy and seeing kyanite crystals in the red clay and imagining that there was a lot more of it in that hill than even his father realized.

History has borne out his hunch. The company's 150 employees produce about 100,000 tons of kyanite a year, and there appears to be no end to the supply in sight. What you need is a fairly young person who does'nt understand the risk involved - better known as a fool."

Again the boyish laugh and again the sense that if he had it to do over again, he would'nt do any of it differently.

"It's been rewarding. People think "you've got a hotel in Virginia Beach; what else could you want? people ask me , "Why not go down to Virginia Beach where there's a party night? But there's quite an attraction to an area where you have a lot of room and a lot of demand for what you're doing. There's almost no one else in the Kyanite business."

Staff photos by DAVID B. HOLLINGSWORTH

Gene Dixon Jr., owner of the Cavalier Oceanfront Hotel, surveys land atop Willis Mountain west of Richmond that was bought by his father for its large deposits of the heat-resistant crystal kyanite. "There are a lot of people who own hotels. There's almost no one else in the kyanite business," he says.

VIRGINIA BEACH SUN, JULY 22, 1971

THIRTY - TWO YEARS AT THE CAVALIER

HE'S MR. GOODWILL AMBASSADOR HIMSELF

By: Helen Crist

He's Mr. Goodwill ambassador himself, and one of the Cavalier's biggest assets it's been said.

He's Carlos F. Wilson, and he's been part of the Cavalier picture for 32 years.

"Wilson? they'll say at the beach ... "He's an institution here".

A jolly smiling man, Wilson was first employed at the hotel when he was 15 ... "but I sort of had to put that a little to 16 to get the job." he says.

His initiation into the workday world was via the kitchen and the Cavalier Formal Gardens which he describes as ... "The prettiest thing I ever saw."

We had flowers all year round-why we had one girl who didn't do anything but arrange flowers every day for the dining room.

Those gardens were replaced some years ago with the parking lot. As for Wilson's early kitchen detail, it was a far cry from the mechanized slick operation of today.

"We didn't have any machines to do the work - washed the dishes, glasses pans, everything by hand.

The elegant days of the Cavalier are still fresh in his mind. "We wore fancy uniforms and on Sunday, I remember, I wore tails, hickory - stripped trousers - all the waiters did."

And no one, of course, would think of simply dropping in on the hotel without a reservation.

"We'd have the same people back year after year.", he recalls.

"It was a whole new ballgame when the Navy took over the hotel during World War II and converted it into a radar school.

Wilson, then, joined the war effort in a civilian capacity at the Norfolk Navy Base. It was his duty to transport the servicemen to the hotel daily for class.

"There were Navy people everywhere," he says. "The Cavalier Garage was a commissary. The Hunt Room was a coffee room.

After the war, the Cavalier management asked him to return. He was delighted to do so.

Wilson's done just about everything workwise at the Cavalier-in the kitchen, the gardens, hall houseman, bellman, at the Beach

Goodwill Ambassador (Con't)

and Cabana Club, and now he's manager of the Hunt Room.

Celebrities? He's known many. He's attended such personalities as the Dorsey Brothers, Benny Goodman, Harry Taylor and so many others.

His favorite? He throws back his head and laughs and says, "Guy Lombardo - yes sir! I used to think when he played that music out there at the Beach Club that he was the greatest ever. That music did something to me. It sure did."

And the Cavalier guests took a liking to him. One in particular, was the late Prime Minister of Canada, William Mackensie King. He vacationed at the hotel for a month over a period of several years and always requested that Wilson serve him.

"His table was number 80 in the dining room." Wilson says.

"In the mornings I'd take up his breakfast to the room. I remember once he said to me "Wilson what's that bird that sings outside my window every morning at the same time and every night?"

"Thats the Blue Bird," I'd tell him, and sure enough it did every time he came to the hotel."

There would be times when the Prime Minister known as a champion of the rights of labor would just feel like talking and they'd sit and chat philosophically for the longest time, he remembers.

Wilson isn't southern born - He's a native of Camden, New Jersey, came here when he was two.

Education? There weren't any schools for us out in Kempsville then". he says, "So we all went to school at the Kempsville Baptist Church. Then I graduated from Union Kempsville High School after it was built."

And Wilson is now chairman of the deacons board and treasurer of the Baptist Church.

His mother, Cora W. Wilson, recently retired from the school system after some 40 years of teaching.

Married to Annie E. Wiggins, they've had two children: Mrs. Maggie Coffield and the late Patricia Anne Spence. He has one granddaughter, Adriena Spence, two, who is the apple of his eye.

Credit is due Wilson, who made it possible for both of his daughters to graduate from St. Augustine College in Raleigh.

"I'm proud of that", He says. But there were times when I did'nt know where the money would come from to keep them in school." In this, he was encouraged and advised by the late Charles Krummell, Manager of the Hotel.

Goodwill Ambassador (Con't)

"Sometimes I'd be so discouraged and Mr. Krummell would say, "Wilson, don't give up, don't give up, don't worry, the money will come somehow." and it always did."

His pholosophy of life sustains him always." "People mean a great deal to me. It does'nt cost anything to be nice. Sometimes I get so happy seeing the same people come back here year after year, that I just feel like giving them a squeeze when I see them coming in."

And when the plush Cavalier oceanfront is erected this fall, It won't no matter how superlative, replace the original Cavalier in wilson's affection.

"Why just driving down Atlantic avenue and looking up at that beautiful building standing so proud, makes me think it's the greatest thing anywhere."

Then, will he be part of the picture at the new establishment? "Ill go if I have to." He says, "But this is home to me - part of me is right here."

The Virginian Pilot, March 11, 1960.

CAVALIER BEING SOLD

HOLDINGS TO STAY INTACT

By: Frank Sullivan, Va. Pilot Business writer.

VIRGINIA BEACH - Sidney Banks, veteran hotel operator will head a new corporation being formed to acquire the Cavalier Hotel and related club properties here.

He announced thrusday that while negotiations will continue for 90 days, interest in the transaction prompted him and his associates to issue a pre-sale announcement.

Banks identified his associates in the new corporation, of which he will be president, as Gene Dixon of Charlotte Court House and Everett A. Fairlamb Jr. and Thomas Oxenham both of Richmond. All are well known in Virginia Investment Circles.

The announcement, said Banks, who operates the resort properties, and other principles in Cavalier-Jefferson Corp., which holds the title, have signed a sales agreement.

Price Set

Banks, president of the holding corporation, said the sale will be for $2,250,000 in cash.

The pre-sale announcement, Banks said, was necessary to quiet concern over 1960 convention bookings and the future status of the Cavalier Yacht and Country Club.

He added that the most persistant rumor - that out-of-state interests are acquiring the Cavalier Properties - is false.

"We are advising all convention groups their bookings will not be affected and that the only change in prospect is in the ownership structure, not management," Banks said.

Banks said it was unfortunate a report was circulated that the Cavalier Yacht and Country Club would be divided into home sites.

"Nothing could be farther from the truth. We realize the value of the club to the entire resort and are planning extensive improvements to the plant."

Banks added that at least 30 other hotels and cottages are members of the club.

Apartment Planned

In disposing of another rumor, a report that a cooperative apartment is being planned for erection on Cavalier property on Pacific Avenue at 40th st. Banks said the present management has been contemplating such a project for several years.

Banks said he saw no reason why the sale should not be

Cavalier being sold (Con't)

consumated.

He and his associates, F.E. Watkins of South Hill and Richmond, and Albert Suttle of Petersburg, the present owners, signed the agreement for the sale of the Cavalier Properties last Sunday.

The three men acquired the Cavalier Property from the Navy in 1945 for a reported $759,300.

Banks, Watkins and Suttle expanded their holdings to include the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, the Keswick Country Club in Charlottesville, and The Cavalier Lauderdale in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

The Cavalier, erected in 1926 and opened in 1927 at one time had 1800 stockholders. It was taken over by the Navy at the onset of World War Two and used as a Radio Training Center.

The Ledger-Star, October 2, 1980.

OLD CAVALIER REJECTS STUDIES, WILL STAY OPEN.
Ledger-Star staff report.

VIRGINIA BEACH - The owner of the 53 year old landmark Cavalier Hotel has appointed a board of directors to oversee continued renovation of the resort facility here.

The decision runs counter to the advise of financial studies which said it makes more sense to do anything except operate the building as a hotel.

"But the Cavalier is Virginia Beach and we've made a decision that it should be preserved," said Winston C. Johnston, General Manager and Vice President of the Cavalier Hotel Corporation.

Others on the new board include Gene Dixon, Jr., of Dillwyn, President; Boyd Colegate and Ed Doty, Vice Presidents; John Hendriksen, Treasurer and Assistant Manager - and Irvine B. Hill, former Norfolk Mayor, Secretary. Margaret Dills has been appointed sales director for both the old and new Cavalier.

Dixon is also president of Kyanite Mining Co., of Dillwyn. The Cavalier Corporation is a subsidiary of Kyanite.

The hotel on Pacific Avenue was closed in 1973 when the new Cavalier Oceanfront Hotel accross the street was opened.

Kyanite bought both properties in 1975 and in June 1976 re-opened the Cavalier on the hill, with plans for a $3.5 million renovation.

"Economic studies said it was not feasible, that we wouldn't make money running it as a hotel. We were told to convert it to an old folks home or tear it down for condominiums", Johnston said in an interview.

But he said the old hotel turned a profit this summer because many convention groups and guests prefer the old hotel accommodations to the newer motel style facility.

The renovation consolidated many rooms into one throughout much of the hotel. There are now 126 rooms in the Cavalier on the hill and 282 rooms in the 11-floor ocean front hotel.

Future renovations will include re-opening of the former dining room and a pool and health spa by next summer, Johnston said.

The old hotel will be closed Sunday for the winter season but will be opened when a convention asks to use it. It will re-open for the summer next May 1.

Richmond Times-Dispatch, August 17, 1980.

TIME COMES ALIVE IN HOTELS RENOVATION
By: Wilford Kale
Times-Dispatch State Staff

VIRGINIA BEACH - At a time when most old, luxury hotels are falling victim to dynamite and demolition crews, one grand old lady has survived and has been almost completely renovated.

She is the old Cavalier Hotel, now called the Cavalier on the hill because of a new modern, glass and steel Cavalier on the ocean that was built sixty years ago.

In her heyday, the old Cavalier attracted guests who wore fancy evening clothes to dinner where their waiters wore tails and white gloves.

The owners do not plan to return the hotel to that kind of operation, but they do plan to offer at the old Cavalier some of the same kind of luxury that was expected 35 years ago.

AFTER FOUR YEARS of gradual renovation, the Cavalier on the hill had all 130 rooms renovated and open to the public last week. Thus, between the two there are 416 rooms (286 in the beachfront hotel) available to the public, forming the lartest hotel complex in Virginia Beach.

"With both of these hotel and all our related facilities this is truly a 21-acre resort," said Irvine B. Hill and associates, a public relations and marketing firm employed by the Cavalier owners to promote the renovated hotel.

"The restoration of the old hotel is a committment on the part of the owners to provide a feeling of luxurious living. It is a true dedication to what the old Cavalier stood for and meant to so many people", Hill said.

As he talked, Boyd Colegate, one of the hotels owners smiled. "Yes, you can say that when we took over, the family never seriously considered tearing down the old hotel, even though that had been recommended", Colegate said.

A Richmond consulting firm examined the old Cavalier property in the mid-1970's after the hotel had been closed in October 1973. The Cixon family, which owns Kyanite Mining Corp. of Dillwyn, closed the hotel and built the Cavalier on oceanfront property directly in front of the old building.

FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS the old Cavalier was completely boarded up. The lobby was littered with trash beer bottles and plaster fallen from the ceiling.

Gone was the elegance that had welcomed thousands of patrons since 1927 when the hotel opened with its own railroad stop. The complex had riding stables, golf course and skeet range.

Nostalgia Comes Alive (Con't)

They are gone now, but the "New Resort" has tennis courts, Shuffleboard, archery range, paddle tennis courts, playground and Cavalier Beach Club.

The Beach Club and Cabana Club on the oceanfront played host to such music greats as Les Brown, Sammy Kaye and Benny Goodman. The big band era made the beach club and the old Cavalier one of the top hotels on the east coast.

The Old Cavalier included a range of rooms from those with an ocean view, a garden view or a kitchen door view to those that had no baths.

Now the rooms, according to Colegate, who designed the internal furnishings for the old Cavalier, all have about the same appointments and generally queen-size beds.

THE ROOMS have been re-decorated, renovated and enlarged.

Cllegate is married to Jean Dixon, sister of Gene Dixon, Jr. and daughter of Mallie M. Dixon, the family that decided it did'nt want the hotel to die.

The renovation was carried out in phases. It took more than three years to get all six floors of the old hotel renovated. The first and second floors have been open a week.

Colegate said there are some projects left we want to work on the old dining room next. We want to have it like it was in the 1800's, and we plan to have our grand indoor swimming pool operational next year.", he said.

The price tag for the renovation is more than $1.5 million, Colegate said, but he would be no more specific estimates however, range to three times that figure, with some more money still needed to complete the project.

"WERE PROUD", Colegate continued, that we've financed this project ourselves. It has come from Kyanite mining. Actually we served as our own general contractors."

Colegate, who lives in Chase City, has spent much of the last year at Virginia Beach working on the Cavalier. He's also been involved with upgrading and reorganizing the new Cavalier resort, which include both the hotel properties. Initially an employee of the mine, he was transferred to Virginia Beach to put the Cavalier operation on a sounder administrative and financial structure.

"Several years ago the family ended a relationship with a firm that leased and operated the new Cavalier. "We felt we had to operate it ourselves", Colegate Said. "When we took it over, we realized there were immediate problems.

"The new Cavaliers reputation was bad, it was considered by visitors only after other hotels and motels were filled. It was kind of an overflow place." He explained.

NOSTALGIA COMES ALIVE (CIN'T)

But now things are different. Reputation for quality has returned, and people are flocking here. Now other places have become overflow spots for us. Winston has helped us turn things around."

The Virginia Beach Sun, August 11, 1982.

COMBINING YESTERDAY WITH TODAY

THE CAVALIERS SEEK UNITY PART I By:
Mike Gooding, Sun Staff Writer.

Editors Note: This article is the first installment of a three-part Virginia Beach Sun series on the Cavalier Hotel. The series will investigate the past, present, and future on the 54-year-old resort hotel.

A bubble bursts upon setting foot on Pacific Avenue.

Strolling down a narrow cobblestone path, through rolling hills and shady trees, one reaches the road and leaves behind the lazy, beautiful ambience of yesteryear and stares at the cold shiney facade of the present.

One departs from the immaculately restored Cavalier Hotel, vintage 1927, to face the sleek and impeccable Cavalier Hotel, vintage 1973. They are two unique entities under one roof. Each is committed to retaining its own exclusive character, yet both adhere to one philosophy, that dictated by the company's vice president and director Boyd Colegate.

"I tell every employee on the premises, if what they serve or what they do wouldn't be good enough to give to their own mothers, then it is'nt good enough for the guests", says Colegate.

This family analogy underlines the basic theory behind the Cavalier's enormous history of success." "We instill in each guest a feeling of being at home," says company assistant sales director Glenn Graham. "From the first person they see, be it the bellman or the desk clerk, the guest must be greeted with a smile. Our business depends on it.

Battling the competition while other hotels in Virginia Beach pay property taxes on rooms that are valued at an average of $12,000 per room, each of the Cavalier's 408 rooms are valued at $40,000. "I guess the city considers us to be the best hotel in town", says Graham.

The $74 a night for double occupancy fee charged by the Cavalier in the summer is "the lowest on the strip", according to Graham.

In the winter, the charge is lowered to $38, which puts the Cavalier in the same penny-pinching league as econo travel motor hotels and other such establishments for budget concious travlers. How can the Cavalier, with it's ornate chandeliers, plush carpeting, and beautiful decor afford to keep their prices so low?. "we've been in business for a long time", Graham ventures.

The majority of the Cavalier's business comes from the business community.

COMBINING (CON'T)

"There is no question that our livlihood depends on the convention business," says Graham. "We're fighting to keep pace with the other hotels, and we do it by being progressive. "We're always on the lookout for new and better ways to serve our guests.

Also contributing to the Cavaliers success is it's reputation. "This is a landmark," Graham says. "When people think of Virginia Beach, they think of the Cavalier because it was here before there was a Virginia Beach."

Graham, a former actor who once played Mel on ABC television's daytime drama "One life to live," is in charge of hyping the hotel amoung business representatives. Public relations is his game and he spends much of his time flying around the country, courting the influential and the rich.

"I don't BS anyone about the hotel", Graham says. "I tell them what it is going to cost and what we have to offer. We will continue to do the business we have done in the convention field because once people have left here, they have left happy and they'll come back. "Our main asset is our people."

Graham characterized the 400 Cavalier employees as "not afraid of doing a lot of work, who aren't afraid of putting in a lot of hours, and who would prefer to sock away their money in the bank to going out and blowing it in the nightclubs. For the most part, the people who work here have a good time, and if the guests can see that, they'll have a good time too."

Hopefully, by creating this kind of atmosphere, we'll be able to bring those people back next year."

What of the off season? Graham explained there is much money to be made in the non-summer month's as well. "We realized several years ago that there are only a couple of months a year that tourists frequent the beach so we've shifted much of our focus to the non-tourists,", he said. "We're open 12 months a year and the trick is to do well all year long. One of our goals would be to attract consistent business in the winter, so our next major renovation is going to be an indoor pool."

Graham said such additions are necessary in the hotel business in order to survive. "People that stand still in this line of work are the ones who end up failing,", he says.

For this summer, occupancy at all hotels in the region is down nearly 25 percent from last year. The Cavalier has experienced only a 12 percent drop in business from last year. Graham is mot pushing the panic button. "Sure business isdown, but we're not particulary worried about it", "we're going to have a good August and a real good september. What we try to do is promote the property. For instance we're giving away a Plymouth Cavalieron October 16." Graham blamed this years decrease on rainy weather and the World's Fair in Knoxville, Tenn., which lured potential customers away from the beach.

COMBINING (CON'T)

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Most of them remize now, though that summer is quickly coming to a close, so they are'nt interested in saving their money any longer", Graham said. Dan Batchelor, the catering manager, concurred. "When somebody really wants a vacation and he wants to be in the nicest place available, he is not going to be deterred by $74 a night", said Batchelor. "The next few months are going to be really good."

Batchelor, 26, has been working for the hotel since he was in high school. Over the years, Batchelor says he has learned that total commitment from the employees has been what has separated the Cavalier from the city's other hotels. "The people who work here have a clean image", he said. "They have to have a willingness to work, along with honesty and openess. Also, they have to be able to get along well with people.

Colegate agrees, "I sincerely believe we have dedicated people right down to the girl who cleans the ashtrays", he said. "The difference here is that nobody here is too big or too important to perform any job that needs to be done. I'll wash a dish or wait on a table if it needs to be done.

Sometimes the simple things are the most important, Colegate says," We have to make sure all the preliminaries are taken care of before that guest walks through the door, he said. "If that bed is not made or that bathroom is not clean, then we're going to have an upset guest on our hands. If we want repeat business, we have to make darn sure everything is right for that customer the first time around."

The hotel business, according to Colegate, is "A Battle." To be successful, he says "is no mystery. Making people happy and encouraging them to come back is the whole ball game." Asked how the Cavalier stacks up against the competition, Colegate merely smiles.

"We are winning," he said. "And we are winning big."

The Virginia Beach Sun, August 18, 1982.

SUN SERIES PART II

GRAND OLD HOTEL STRIVES TO KEEP UP WITH THE TIMES.

Editors note: This article is the second installment of a three part Virginia Beach series on the Cavalier Hotel. The series is investigating the past, present and future of the 54 year old resort hotel.
By: Mike Gooding, Sun Staff Writer.

Zoot suits once adorned the gentlemen who sliced up the wooden deck of the Cavalier Beach Club and Cabana Colony as they swooned under the moon with their escorts for the evening. The music was swinging and guests of the hotel danced the night away.

Frank Sinatra and Jimmy Dorsey were two of the bigger names to perform there for the weekly Saturday night shindigs. As the years passed the names changed from Bob Hope to Robert Goulet to Elton John. While all may not have performed at the Cavalier Hotel, each has been a guest there at one time or another as have been Phyllis Diller, former first lady Roselyn Carter, and Virginia Governor Charles Robb.

When in Virginia Beach, why do the stars stay at the Cavalier? Coining a phrase from one of the hotel's more recent celebrity guests Muhammad Ali, Cavalier Vice President and General Manager, Ed Doty explains:

"We are, in short, the greatest," he boasts.

Such confidence has been the trademark of the Cavalier since it's birth in 1927. Between then and now, however, hotel management somehow lost sight of the facility's grand reputation. In 1972, a syndicate which, at the time, controlled the hotel, built a new, high-rise Cavalier along the oceanfront and boarded up the original Cavalier, presumably forever.

"Gene Dixon, Sr. from Lynchburgh bought the hotel from Sidney Banks in 1960, and he did a supberb job with it." Doty recalled. "But for some reason, Gene decided to lease the property to the syndicate. Well, those people did'nt know too much about the hotel business, and they just did'nt do very well with the property. When Gene died, Gene, Jr. became president of the hotel and he bought the property from the syndicate. That makes the period in time when the Cavalier got back on the right track."

At once, the younger Dixon began scheming to re-open the Old Cavalier. It was to be an awsome undertaking, in that every stick of furniture, every chandelier and fixture, and every shred of carpet had been auctioned off. Dixon employed his Brother-in-law, Boyd Colegate, to re-furbish the run-down structure.

Keeping up with the times (Con't)

"Gene had a tough decision to make when he became president ", Doty said. "He could have made the property into a condominium, or he could have made the property into an old ladies home, or he could even have just bulldozed the whole thing.

"Instead, Gene took a big risk", said Doty.

All the studies were showing that the big business was going toward oceanfront property. We were in the middle of the 1974 arab oil embargo and nobody was traveling anywhere. Yet Gene had a gut feeling. "I think he decided to re-model the hotel because he felt it would have been what his father wanted him to do."

Colegate, a self-made millionaire in the decorating business, was brought into the fold as a consultant in the project. Before it was finished, Colegate was appointed vice-president of the corporation in 1978, the old Cavalier became the newest Cavalier, opening two of its six guest floors for business, along with the dining room, ball room, and lobby. Today, all of the floors have been completed and all that remains is the restoration of the indoor pool. The possibility of incorporating a health Spa into the old hotel is being kicked around as well, Doty said.

"Sure, it was pretty risky re-opening that old hotel", Doty said. "But there were so many people in the community who felt so kindly toward it that the chance, I believe, was worthwhile.

Treating the guests royally is the key today, just as it was in the old days, according to Doty.

"There is a certain segment of the wealth which needs to feel pampered", he said, "so that is what we do. In essence, we are slaves to the guests. And, if I ever see a bellman or a waiter who does'nt treat the guest like a king, I go kick him in the butt and correct the situation."

For Doty, people-pleasing has been a lifelong pursuit. From the hotels in New York, Washington and Nashville to Kalamazoo, Michigan, the Cavalier Vice-President has been in the business since the 1930's, making friends with the likes of Harry Truman and Nat King Cole. In that time, he has developed a philosophy for success.

"You've got to have a feeling for people", he said. "You've got to remember that we have nothing to sell the guests that they can take away with them except their memories. So, we have to be like the king's jester and be certain that those guests leave here smiling.

I went into the business during the great depression, and there were always forty guys out there waiting to take my job, so I had to be good", Doty said. "That meant making sure the customer was always happy, because if he wasn't and my boss found out, I was going to be out in the street.

The same principle still holds true today."

The identity crisis suffered by by the hotel in the mid 70's was a by-product of the mismanagement, Doty said. "Those guys in the syndicate, they just did'nt understand the hotel business. It was'nt in their blood. They were lawyers and accountants trying to make a buck." Not so with the current management, according to Doty. "We're basically a family operation, and I would'nt have it any other way.

"What we have to sell here is our family - the people, Doty continued. "Anybody can sell you some bricks and mortar and call it a hotel, but they cant give you what we've got. You won't find that anywhere."

Sun Series - Part III, The Virginia Beach Sun, Aug. 25, 1982.

OLD TIMERS REFLECT UPON HOTEL'S HISTORY.

This is the final installment of a three part Virginia Beach Sun series on the Cavalier Hotel. This segment will trace the 53 year old Hotel's roots and point to it's future.

By: Mike Gooding
Sun Staff Writer.

Thomas W. Fentress, Joseph Walton and Carlos Wilson have seen it all from the grassy hills which overlook the Atlantic Ocean. The great depression, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, watergate. The world has changed dramatically, but the Cavalier, their home, family and employer for all these years, remains uncathed, a testiment to tradition.

It was a time when very little money went a very long way, Walton remembered. "The guests used to come and stay for a whole summer", he said. "They'd pay $10.00 a day, and that included all free meals.

"We lived here at the hotel for $30 a month", he continued. "They gave us three square meals and pressed our uniforms daily. As far as I'm concerned, this was the most excellent job around. I felt very priviledged to work here. In fact, I really felt as though I was rich."

Walton, a bellman, first came to the Cavalier in 1929 seeking employment as a caddy at the hotel's Country Club. On the same day, he was talked into becomming a bus boy. He began his career with the hotel then, and along the way has been a waiter and has shined shoes for 75 cents a day. "The money really did'nt matter", he said. "We always had a roof over our heads and food to eat."

Walton remembered his fondest experience at the hotel. "I got called on to take a bottle of champaign to one of the rooms upstairs", he said. "I did'nt think it was any big deal, until I opened the door and there in the room was Elizabeth Taylor. I about dropped my tray", Walton said he got the actress' autograph, which he gave to his grandson.

"A lot of people say she has gotten fat. Well, let me tell you, she is the most beautiful woman in the world, and she is very, very, warm.

Walton said other thrills he has experienced have come upon meeting other famous guests in the hotel such as Victoria Principal, Roger Mudd, Lady Bird Johnson and Muhammad Ali.

"One of the reasons I don't leave, even after all these years is sitting right accross the street," Walton said of the original hotel. "It is the grandest facility in the state. I haven't seen any other hotel surpass it in elegance or beauty. It is just like Budweiser says ---When you say Cavalier, you've said it all."

Old Timers Reflect (Con't)

Wilson, a bartender, first came to the hotel in 1938. The key to his longetivity in the business is simple, he said: Treat everyone equally. "Everyone is the same in this hotel", hesaid. "It doesn't matter if they are rich or famous. If they are guests in this hotel, we treat them as if they were royalty." When he first came to the Cavalier, things were somewhat different, Wilson said. "The guests were your personal guests.", he said. "From the time they entered the hotel, if they stayed for a day or for a month, you were their personal servant. You got to know their names and they got to know yours. It was a lot more personal back then.

"The tips weren't as great then as they are now", Wilson continued, "but everything was much cheaper then, too. The people were much more courteous also. you couldn't get into the dining room unless you were well-dressed and had a reservation. Today, they come in wearing bathing suits".

The old hotel "was a city within a city", Wilson remembered. "We had everything: Doctors on the property, a steambath, stores. You never had to leave the hotel because everything you'd ever need is right there."

Working for the Cavalier, Wilson said, has been the most rewarding experience in his life. "When we started out we did'nt make much money, but we appreciated what we got", he said. "This company has been very good to me over the years. It has helped me to educate my two daughters at the same time, and I know that is something I never would have been able to do."

Fentress is the company's oldest employee, having served the Cavalier continuously since 1928. Despite what he calls a "Grand association", with the hotel over the years, Fentress can remember some tough times there, too.

"The depression came in nineteen-hundred and twenty nine, and it was really kind of sad," he said. "A lot of people got wiped out and had to leave the hotel.Business was real slow.

"For a time we worked for nothing", Fentress continued. "We'd go two and three months at a time without getting paid, but we weren't too worried because we had shelter and food. "That was all we really needed anyways."

A decade later, World War II was gearing up, and the Cavalier was converted into a radar school for the United States Navy. Nearly all of the hotels' employees were let go, but not Fentress.

"The hotel was also used as a place to keep German soldiers as prisoners. "He remembered those guys, though they kind of tickled me", Fentress recalled having joked with the Nazi prisoners about automobiles. "they were pretty nice people once you got to talking to them." He added.

Old Timers Reflect (Con't)

The worst period, however, was when the original Cavalier was shut down in 1972 in favor of the new ocean front resort. I felt like I was entering another era when that old hotel closed down", he said. "I felt like I was losing a lot of old memories and a lot of old friends."

The original property was, of course, re-furbished and re-opened in 1978. Despite the fact that Fentress has since become a waiter in the new hotel, he was extremely happy to see the old hotel resume business." "It made me go back to the old days, when it re-opened, he said".

Still, however it was'nt quite the same. "There's no com= parison", he said. "Everything was much better then. From the service to the grounds.

One of the things that made the Cavalier go elegant was the beautiful sunken gardens, it made the place into a country hideaway.

Today, Fentress still adhears to the same standards he did when he joined the staff at age 16. "Being a poor boy like I was, I learned not to waste anything", he said. I was always polite to the customers, too."

Fentress said he will remember the nights when he thinks of the good times of his youth at the hotel. "We were'nt allowed to swim on the beach during the day so we waited until after dark", he said. "We'd go swimming then, and we had the biggest time. Also, we'd go down to the Sunken Gardens and swap stories. The nights were the grandest times."

The Cavalier in the future:

The growth and change that has marked the hotel's 53 years shall continue according to Vice President Boyd Colegate". Two major renovations are slated to occur, which Colegate says will transform the Cavalier into one of the premiere resorts in America.

By March 15, 1983, a complete health spa should be ready for business, Colegate said, located within the old hotels basement, the facilities will include a 20-station exercise machine, sauna, steam room, massages, a one mile jogging course, and an indoor pool.

"We want to become the La Costa of the East", Colegate said, comparing the Virginia Beach Hotel with the famous California Fitness Resort. "The chairman of the corporation will be able to come here, spend a few weeks getting in shape, and operate his entire business from our phone system. Hopefully the spa could develop into a year round business."

The second change will be the addition to the new hotel of an 18,000 foot convention center. Construction is projected to start in 1984, with completion slated for 1987. "With 426 rooms presently, we need space to serve 700 to 800 persons for dinner at one sitting," Colegate said. "This convention center will move us up to 630 rooms. We will then become the largest and most complete Convention center in the state.

Old Timers Reflect (Con't)

"I really want to see this done before I die," Colegate said. "But this will not be done at the expense of things which have made this property great in the past. our goal will be, as it always has been, to make sure that every human body that leaves the hotel leaves with happy thoughts, good memories, and a desire to one day come back. We're winning now, and we will win then.

THE VIRGINIAN - PILOT DECEMBER 15, 1974.

CAVALIER AUCTION

PROUD ERA VESTIGES REMAIN

By: Bob Lipper
Virginian Pilot staff writer.

VIRGINIA BEACH - They had come to pick at the old lady's bones. Seeking bargains, memories, a mattress and box springs for the guest room, a desk for the study. "They loaded the goods in the back of the station wagon and drove away, carrying a piece of the old Cavalier with them."

Inside the once grand hotel, there were stacks of mattresses, rows of chairs, boxes of utensils and chinaware, piles of waste-baskets, and table after table of lamps.

The people walked through the lobby quietly, then drifted into the Cavalier Room, the Colonial Room, the garden porch to poke with a certain degree of reverence through the heirlooms of an age left behind when we discovered neon and the interstate highway.

"Hey, Maury How much is this?!" asked a man holding a framed print of a Williamsburg street scene in his hand.

Auctioneer Maury Riganto glanced up. "Fifteen", he said, and he returned his attention to the itemized list he was preparing for the woman who had purchashed a small wicker hamper and some articles from the dining room.

This was monday, one of two days last week that Riganto conducted an informal liquidation sale of the Cavalier furnishings. In January he will auction off the remaining contents of the six story relic, which has not housed a lodger for 14 months.

"I'm interested in people in the area getting a piece of the Cavalier", said Riganto, and so he had passed the word that he would open the hotel to browsers on selected days. The invitation brought such visitors as the man who had been stationed in the hotel when it was used by the Navy during Wlrld War II and wanted to show his old quarters to his wife. They spent $90.

"I need some stuff, but I cant find anything I want", a man was saying as he mendered through a sea of lamps. He was shopping alone, but he spoke to a woman on the other side of the table. She looked up and smiled.

"It strikes me as real sad", she said, her hand passing lightly across the base of a porcelin lamp.". "Yeah, agreed the man health-heartedly. "Gotta go, though."

That decision was made recently by Cavalier Associates, the group that operates the Old Cavalier and the yearold Cavalier Oceanfront.

Cavalier Auction (con't)

"We are still trying to find a tenant (for the old hotel"), says Mike Fitzpatrick, who manages both buildings, "But we want to eliminate disposable items. We did'nt feel it would inhibit the search for a tenant".

There have been numerous rumors concerning the identity of prospective tenants, with possibilities ranging from a health spa to a nursing home to an office building.

The Bayside Ecumenical Council, which would like to open a home for the elderly, is the leading contender.

Some fear for the building's future should a tenant not be located, (The property is not for sale). Raze the Cavalier ? "That's what everybody's worrying about," concedes Fitzpatrick, "But nothing will occur with the building for at least another year."

Thus does the brick antique sit there on the hill on 42nd street, starting down haughtily at it's gleaming, modern sister hard by the ocean. The confluence of Atlantic and Pacific Avenues defines the generation gap.

Once, the Cavalier shined. When it opened in 1927, Gov. Harry Byrd proclaimed the 208 room edifice "The best resort hotel in America", and it's register was graced by the Fitzgeralds and other practitioners of the good life. They came to a world of sloping lawns, chandeliers, ornate woodwork, oriental rugs and overstuffed furniture, danced to the music of Russ Carlyle and Sammy Kaye, and counted their blessings and capital gaines.

"I love that place, "says Sidney Banks, the man who managed the hotel during most of it's glory years. He is 71 and now runs a resort in Florida, but his links to the Cavalier remain strong. "It made me sad when they closed it," he says. "I think it's still the Queen of the Beach."

In the years after World War II, however, occupancy figures sagged, and when the 300 room Cavalier Oceanfront opened, the demise of the old hotel was complete. Today, It's climbing vines are grotesquely interwined and it's shrubbery is in bad need of trim. The paint on lawn chairs has eroded and a ball washer is a stubborn sentinel for the overgrown putting green.

The decay - and a sense of what the Cavalier once-was can be surveyed from room 606, a large corner room with a magnificent view of the ocean. There are the tennis and shuffleboard courts, the wide steps leading to the front entrance, the landscaped grounds but there too, is a sagging railing, an overturned lawn chair, the spector of the New Cavalier.

Room 606 most recently rented for $75 a day (modified american plan) in season, but now it is empty; stripped of it's beds and dressers by Riganto's men.

Cavalier Auction (con't)

The atmosphere is much the same elsewhere - a brooding silence. The rooms are being steadily emptied, and on this day the hallways were untraveled except for a woman on the third floor. She hugged two pillows as she peered into rooms. "Mattresses", she said, "we're trying to get 'em".

In the lobbies and on the porches, the opulence of the past can only be imagined. An empty champagne bottle forms an ironic still life in the dining room. Musty odors settle around the rattan lounges. Fallen chunks of plaster and three beer cans rest on the bottom of the indoor pool.

"It makes me sad to go in there and look at that swimming pool and think of all the good times the kids and I had", says Millie McGuire. She and Shushook are sitting at the desk at which Riganto is totaling up their purchases. Millie's prize is an enormous set of andirons; Shu's is a chandelier.

Riganto interrupts his figuring. "The Cavalier is Virginia Beach", he says.

He has been doing this sort of work for years, selling nostalgia, and you ask if he is affected by this particular job. "Fact is, it bothers me", he replies. "Ive been coming to this place for the last 40 years. I was an original member of the Cavalier Beach Club. I have a lot of feeling for this place.".

Jerrold, one of Riganto's workers, appears carrying the remains of a McDonalds repast, "We had our lunch in the Cavalier", he says. "Didn't have no waiter though." He grins and walks away.

"I think it's sad, says Millie, glancing toward the high ceiling "I just hope they won't do anything with the building."

"I don't really think it will be torn down", says Riganto. "I know of at least seven people interested.

Maury goes back to his list, pausing to dispence brochures of the old hotel to a couple of musicians appearing in the lounge at the New Cavalier. They have wandered across the street to tour the building thats the beach", says Maury. "When you say the Cavalier, that's Virginia Beach."

Outside a man is loading chairs into the back of a pick-up; three women get out of a car and walk around the entrance.

"Are we allowed in? asks one of the women. She lives in Virginia Beach. The other two are visitors from Massachusetts. "I just wanted to show it to them" she says. "They'd heard about it."

"Heard what", you ask "what it used to be". says one of the Mass. women. "All the stars who stayed here."

The other woman from Mass. looks up at the Cavalier "This used to be a hotel"? she says "My god, what a hotel".

The Ledger-Star, Monday, June 28, 1976.

OLD CAVALIER SHINES AGAIN ON BEACH HILL

By: Donald Moore

VIRGINIA BEACH - The smile on James Watson's face as he stood in the lovely lobby of the Old Cavalier Hotel helped roll time back a half century.

Asked his occupation, he replied happily, "Bellhop". In fact, I am the only Bellhop."

Watson confided that his grandfather Bob Watson, had worked at the hotel shortly after it's opening in 1927, becoming it's headwaiter.

The partially restored hotel, long a landmark at the resort, has its official re-opening appropriately enough, on the fourth of July.

The front entrance, reached by the inclined, circular drive up the Cavalier's little hill, is still impressive.

And the lobby, done in soft blues, grays and pinks, reflects the sheer beauty of another age.

The rehabilitation for the owners, Kyanite Mining Co., began eight months ago under the direction of Winston Johnson with Boyd Colegate doing the decoration

They have caught the feeling of the 1920's in the lobby and the 52 rooms to be opened on the fourth.

The Cavalier had fallen on lean times before it was closed about two years ago when the new Cavalier opened across Atlantic Avenue at 42nd Street. Full restoration is expected to take another year.

The old hotel is now known as the Original Cavalier. The new one as the Cavalier Oceanfront.

The original, which will have 120 rooms, is being operated as an adjunct to the 278 room oceanfront. Guests may stipulate a stay at the original, or they could get rooms there if the ocean-front is full.

The rooms at the original are double the size they once were. Through removal of the room partitions, the number of rooms has been reduced from the former 227 to the planned 120.

This has had an interesting result, Watson pointed out. Most of the rooms have two baths.

The standard fee for most of the rooms during the summer season is $50.

Old Cavalier Shines (Con't)

Some of the rooms have already been placed in use, Doty, Director of sales at the Cavalier pointed out.

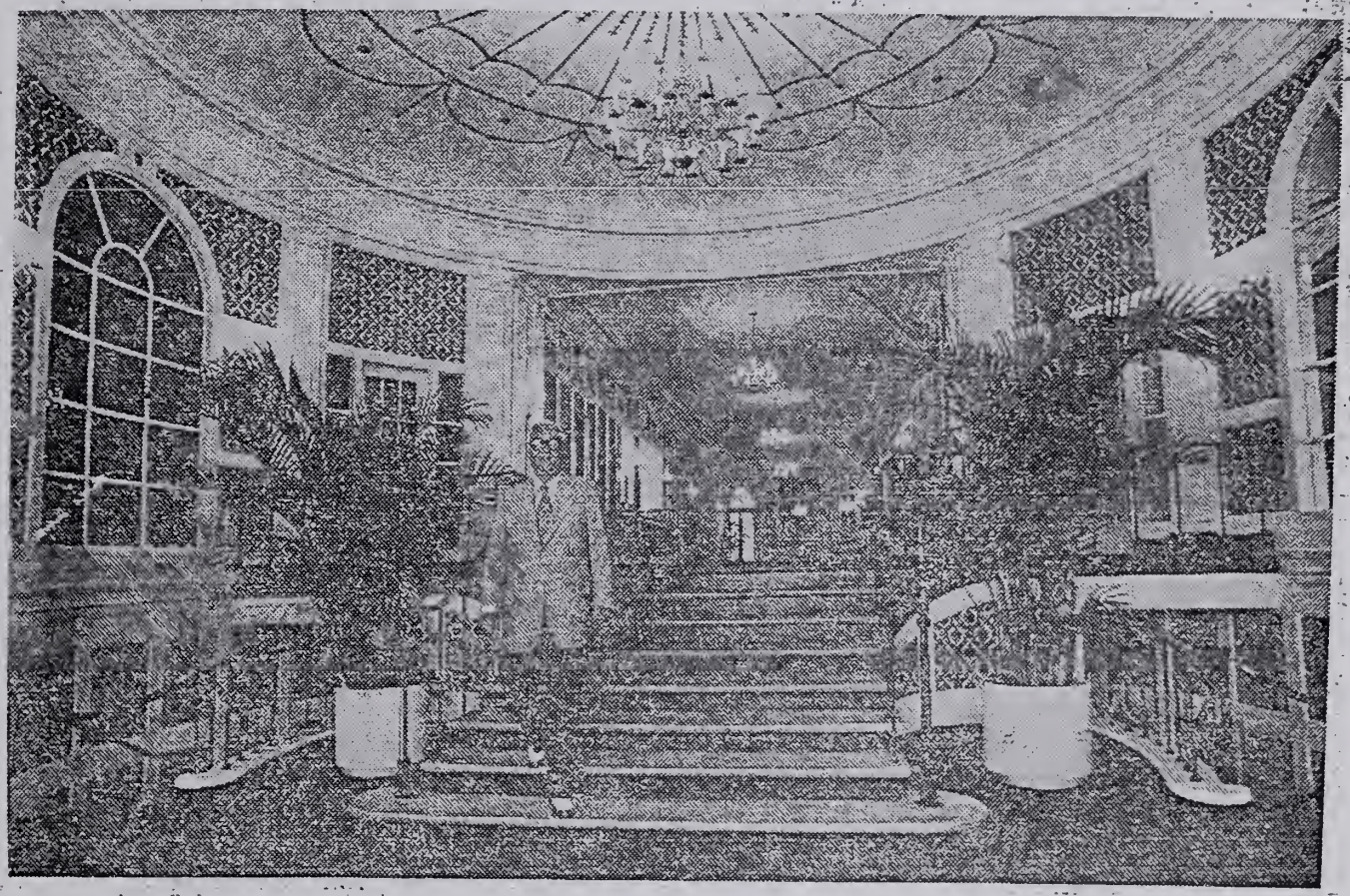
He said 30 members of the U.S. Secret Service used the Original Cavalier rooms two weeks ago during the overflow times of the Baptist Convention in Norfolk. They were here because of President Gerald Ford's appearance for a speech at the Convention.

The indoor swimming pool, well known to many beach visitors, is to be re-opened later this year.

Also on the list for restoration are the Cavalier Ballroom, The Virginia Room, and the Colonial Room.

This area of the hotel is currently full of traffic as furniture is moved through it into the building for use in the rooms.

The oriental rugs in the lobby have the look of times past. And this is true. They were original with the Original Cavalier.



Staff photo by Jim Jennings

A look at refurbished Cavalier Hotel

Ed Doty comes down the front lobby steps

The Virginian Pilot - Sunday, August 29, 1976.

RETURN TO AN ELEGANCE ERA IN PLAN TO RE-OPEN CAVALIER.

Subscriptions for an elegant hotel at Virginia Beach had been plentiful the preceeding year, so on Sept. 21, 1925 officials of the Virginia Beach Resort and Hotel Corporation used the Virginian - Pilot to solicit name suggestions for the hosterly under way.

Some suggested such names as Algonquin, Linkhorn, Crystal, and Sea Pines. But in the end, the name Cavalier was chosen because of the Colonial architecture throughout.

This was the hotel that was to replace the old Princess Anne Hotel in luxury and splendor and splendor and to fill the void of 20 years since the Princess Anne burned.

The American Hotel Co. took over the management of the young aristocrat of resorts, and the famous and wealthy flocked to the hotel, as did honeymooners, by the thousands.

Norfolk Southern ran excursions to the beach, and the affluent tourists by the carful were deposited and later picked up at the Cavalier. So many wealthy families came by car that a special dining area was designated for chauffeurs.

Servants of guests were housed in out - buildings, and space in the tiny guest rooms was conserved by storing luggage elswhere in the hotel.

Among the early guests were Harry K. Thaw, actor John Boles, comedian Will Rogers, author F. Scott Fitzgerald, and his wife Zelda.

The Wall Street crash and the depression that followed in the last of the 1920's and the early 1930's, however, dealt the hotel a crippling blow.

Lou Windholz was the receiver for the Cavalier operation of the American Hotel chain when he hired Roland Eaton to replace Sidney Banks as manager in the fall of 1936. The Cavalier was long on prestige and short on cash.

Eaton, retired from a second career as a hospital administrator and living in Charlottesville, loves his days at the Cavalier (1936 until the navy took over the building for a school in 1942) with fondness.

He promoted heavily but inexpensively. "Most of it was exchange promotion," he said, explaining that resort hotels and train and ship lines would go in for extensive recommendations of each other for their mutual benefit.

Eaton was responsible for the mass bookings of "name bands and the radio broadcasts from the Beach Club that spread the name of The Cavalier across the nation.

Return to elegance (Con't)

Windholz was also president of Norfolk -Southern Railroad and was a director of the company that operated a passenger ship service between Norfolk and Baltimore. He was instrumental in bringing conventions to the Cavalier, Eaton said.

The band bookings were the result of Eaton's connection with the Music Corporation of America. His arrangement with MCA was that in return for booking a full season of big name bands he was guranteed that he could get his choice of 12 from his prefential list of 15 orchestras.

This dozen would include such names as Russ Morgan, Dean Hudson, Guy Lombardo, Hal Kemp, Ina Ray Hutton, Cab Calloway, Tommy Dorsey, and many others who either were on top then or on their way up.

Eaton said that although the hotel was rigidly restricted against negroes and jews he received a citation from Tuskeegee Institute for employing more blacks than any comparable hotel.

"All of the employees were black except the office help", he recalled.

"The help got free room and board, free uniforms, and free medical care, plus $5 per week in salary; and that was'nt bad for depression days", Eaton said.

Some of the employees made a career of the Cavalier. One was C.I. Siler, the Maitre D'Hotel, whose son now teaches school in Virginia Beach during the winter and works as a policeman in the vacation period.

World War II ended the era for The Cavalier. The Navy leased the hotel and turned it into a military radio school. The interior was re-arranged to take care of more resident servicemen, and the public rooms were stripped of their finery and converted into classrooms.

When the Cavalier was released by the military, a group of businessmen headed by Sidney Banks, the former manager who also had interests in Largo Mar, Fla., took over the operation. They recovered enough in damage claims against the government to make the hotel habitable again.

But many luxury hotels in the resort areas, economic factors were against the success of the big expensive-to-operate enterprises.

Inflation was a growing thing, and the clientele with the required taste and bank accounts was thinning.

In 1961 Banks sold his interest to Gene Dixon, Sr. The Kyanite mining industrialist. Combining forces with Dixon was the SAB Corporation.

Return to elegance (Con't)

This was a management group made up of principally of Gerald I. Lavenstein, Thomas C. Broyles, Arthur Rutter, and L. Charles Burlage.

SAB and Cavalier Hotel Corp. were engaged in a joint venture called Cavalier Associates. Under this administration the old hotel closed it's doors to the public, and the Cavalier oceanfront opened its 300 room, 11 story tower.

What would become of the landmark hotel on the hill became an emotional question for many Virginia Beach residents. There was talk of demolition, of turning it into a geriatrics home, and of converting it into a hospital.

The end seemed to be at hand in December 1974 when much of the original furnishings was sold at auction.

But the prospect was squashed shorrly afterward. Dixon, Sr., died his son, Gene Dixon, Jr. became a manageing force in the family corporation. He bought the SAB interests in the hotel venture and announced that the Original Cavalier would be re-opened as a hotel and that it would be restored to its former aristocratic status.

There is a move afoot to make the formal re-opening (when all of the work is finished). Representative of the original opening.

The original ceremony in 1927 featured oratory by the then-Governor, Harry F. Byrd, who proclaimed the Cavalier to be "The best resort hotel in America."

The present management is trying to find an open date in the schedule of the former governor's son, Harry F. Byrd, Jr. to stage a rededication.

The Virginian-Pilot, Aug. 29, 1976.

NOSTALGIA CALLS GUESTS FROM CAVALIER PAST

By: Richard Cobb
Virginian-Pilot real-estate editor.

When the original Cavalier Hotel at Virginia Beach re-opened in June after three years of hybernation and change, a couple on the shady side of middle age were the first people to come to the registration desk.

The man had the key in his hand. It was for a fifth floor room . . . . the room that the couple had occupied when they were honeymooners, 35 years ago. Could they get the same room again?

Thirty-five years ago the man was a young Navy Officer. He kept the key to the hotel room throughout his career that ended when he retired in Virginia Beach, and it was time for engaging in some nostalgia.

The answer to his request was to the effect that the couple could'nt get the same exact room because it did'nt exist any longer, but they could get part of the same room in the same location.

During the winter renovation of the fourth, fifth and sixth floors, many of the small guest rooms were consolidated into large bedrooms and into bedroom - parlor combinations. The merging of the tiny rooms left some of the larger ones with two baths per unit.

The old hotel today has only 51 rooms available. When the renovation is finished it is expected to have 120 rooms. This is slightly more than half the number available when the hotel closed three years ago.

Nostalgia is a prime for many of the guests that specify they want space in the old elegant hotel atop the grassy sand dune on the west side of Atlantic Avenue at 42nd street.

It's young sister, Cavalier Oceanfront Hotel stands 11 stories high across Atlantic Avenue. Its interior is strictly modern.

Both are owned by the Cavalier Hotel Corp. which is a subsidiary of the Kyanite Mining Corp. Gene Dixon, Jr., 33, is president of the parent corporation and is principal director.

The Kyanite Mining Corp. is located in Dillwyn, Va. It produces a mineral that is the base for industrial porcelain.

Dixon is credited with making the firm decision to keep the old Cavalier and restore it to its former grandeur. That dedision will involve spending between $3 and $3.5 million according to Thomas Runsnock, managing director for Cavalier Hotel Properties.

Nostalgia calls guests (Con't)

The Old Cavalier will have all of the amenities of yore (except that the Hunt Club will no longer be private by June 1978, according to the present timetagle, Rusnock said. The bulk of the renovation work will take place during the winter months.

Although nostalgia is a key in the restoration work, old-timers who enter the refurbished lobby today will find some changes in decor that they might find startling.

M. J. (Boyd) Colegate of Colegate Square, Chase City (Va) is the interior decorator. Where the original lobby was paneled in mahogany, a red and white flocking has been superimposed and the woodwork left exposed has been painted white.

The hotel now has no public rooms and no food service except continental breakfasts that are served in the sun porch area.

The Raleigh Rooms restoration has started. Oriental rugs have been ordered and a grand piano has been brought out of storage and made ready for use. The even larger piano that was there before the temporary closing was sold at auction last year during one of the periods of indecision about the future of the old hotel.

Scheduled for reworking and refurbishing with the original brass and crystal fixtures are the Cavalier Room, the Hunt Room and the ballroom.

The indoor swimming pool and it's deckings, scene of many coctail parties, fashion show, and beauty pageants is in a bad state of repair, but, according to Rusnock, will also be restored.

Across Atlantic Avenue, the Cavalier Beach and Cabana Club is also scheduled for refurbishing. The Beach Club is a high point in pleasant memories for thousands of natives and beach visitors since the early 1930's.

Billy Morris, 68, Bandleader;

I first played the Cavalier in 1939. They were the good old days, yes sir. Dancing was very popular then. I liked the smooth style of music, society stuff - Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin.

Iused to get more applause than I do now.

"You could always tell the people who had money. They'd fold it up so small and stick it in your hand. In the old days, the women loved to get into that long dress."

"Tommy Newsome (of the tonight show with Johnny Carson") used to play in my band at the Old Cavalier. helluva nice fella. I met Georgie Jessel and Frances Langford; Arthur Murray and his wife were there. Boy they were good dancers."

Leah Jaffe, 72, the first Miss Virginia:

Nostalgia Calls Guests (Con't)

"My mother did'nt want me to enter the thing. In those days, it was'nt the most elegant thing to do. But that contest was the highlight of the hotel opening."

"It was divine"

"Today, the Miss Virginia Contest at the Roanoke Hotel goes on for several days. They judge on beauty, poise charm and talent. In my day they were strictly concerned with figure - They weren't interested in talent or anything like that."

"They played "Valencia." "I can hear it now. The tea dances were beautiful - everybody looked like fashion plates.

"It's a pitty how time takes it's toll."

Carlos Wilson, 60, Bar Manager:

"I started as a busboy here when I was only 15 years old. I did'nt even have a social security card: I had to walk to the Norfolk Post Office to get one."

Dixon's grandmother Clara, 88, encouraged him to return the hotel to the way it had been before the war. Dixon insists the project is not entirely sentimental; He is not saving a white elephant. He expects it to make money.

"The original hotel can stand against anything placed at that location in today's market," Dixon said. "We consider both (the old and new) buildings as one property; one does not carry the other."

So for six years Dixon's brother-in-law decorator Boyd Colegate, 55, has been laboring as executive Vice President of the Cavalier, personally supervising a projected $3.5 million renovation effort. He knocked walls out of many of the rooms to make them larger, reducing their number to 126. He re-plastered , repapered, and refurnished.

Colegate expects to have the job complete next year with the re-doing of the old hotel's olympic lion studded pool.

"What we have done," Colegate said, "is kind of a miracle, because we've done it all ourselves; we haven't used any outside contractors - we did it all internally.

When we started the Beach Club was a disaster. Plaster hung off the paneling in the lobby, kids were all over the place. It would have made you cry to go into the Hunt Room and see the furniture smashed, the holes in the ceiling.

"But we have spent in excess of $2 million cash, and there is no indebtedness of this hotel at all."

The Old Cavalier opened on a limited basis in 1976; now rooms are available there for guests and conventions year-round.

Nostalgia Calls Guests (Con't)

The Beach Club is completely restored, providing the only outdoor dance floor on the east coast once again. A sauna and health spa will be installed at the old hotel;

The Cavalier was named after a group of colonial settlers who came to Virginia Beach in the mid 1600's latter day colonials kept coming, and once it hummed with card parties, golf tourneys, saddle horses. "Hospitality," the management proclaimed, "Is a heritage." Tennis players wore white linen, no jeans , no shorts.

Rudy Vallee performed, Guy Lombardo, the Dorseys.

Bathing suits still had sleves. "People were nicer then," Carlos Wilson observed. "they always had time to talk. Today, I don't know whether it's the economy or what, but they just don't know whether it's worth their time to stop and talk or not."

It was the very illusion of leisure. And, after 54 years and the long attentions of a staff moving over it like earnest bees shoring up a sagging honeycomb, it still is.

The Glenn Miller orchestra played here last winter four days before Christmas; 500 people came.

Long live the Queen.

The Virginian Pilot, July 24, 1978.

NOSTALGIA DANCE

Cavalier Beach Club opens for a night of memories.

By: Cammy Sessa
Virginian Pilot staff writer.

VIRGINIA BEACH - Mary Sands and Kay Crutchfield looked up at an almost full moon over the open deck dance floor and agreed that everything was going as planned.

"We picked this date in January," Mrs. Crutchfield said, "Because we wanted to get as close to the full moon as possible."

The two women organized the fourth annual Cavalier Beach Club Nostalgia Dance Saturday where 650 people partied, danced, reminisced, and had a midnight breakfast.

"We do this each year for all the people who remember and love the Old Beach Club", Mrs. Crutchfield said.

Built in 1927, the Cavalier Beach Club was a social landmark for beach residents as well as guests staying at the nearby Cavalier Hotel. In addition to the usual Beach Club's sunning and swimming facilities, the place had an open deck ballroom where big "Name" bands played for Saturday Night Dances. The club closed in 1972.

"It was a lovely gracious time that people long for today, "Mrs. Crutchfield said looking out at the breaking waves about 100 feet in front of the convex structure. "It's an ideal place for a beach dance."

The annual one night re-opening of the club was a brainchild of Mrs. Sands who came up with the idea of a nostalgic dance in 1975.

"The first dance was so well attended that each year since, Mrs. Sands and Mrs. Crutchfield tackle the chore of organizing the event.

"It is a labor of love," Mrs. Crutchfield said.

In addition to her duties as chairwoman, Mrs. Sands always sits in for the drummer in the band for at least one number. Bandleader Billy Morris called on her to beat out the rhythm of "Won't you come home Bill Bailey."

Many former members of the club were recognized by Morris including Robert Figg and W. Kenton Cason. Cason was hard to miss at the old dances due to his ever-present straw hat.

But there were others like Pam Ruckner, 32, who said she grew up in Virginia Beach attending the dances.

"When I was a little girl, my parents took me to the tea dances," she said.

Nostalgia Dance (Con't).

"I loved it."

"This used to be a way of life at the beach," said Mrs. Roy M. Heans. "So now, we look forward to this dance each year and think about the old times."

"It is a lovely dance because it's outdoors," said Mrs. John Salop of Virginia Beach. "It is very romantic."

Mr. & Mrs. Fred H. Zajonc also thought it was romantic. "We came from Chicago," said Zajonc.

"In July, 1948, we spent our honeymoon here and we are back tonight celebrating our anniversary."

Mr. and Mrs. William R. Long of Tarboro, N.C. also flew in from Chicago where Long was on a business trip.

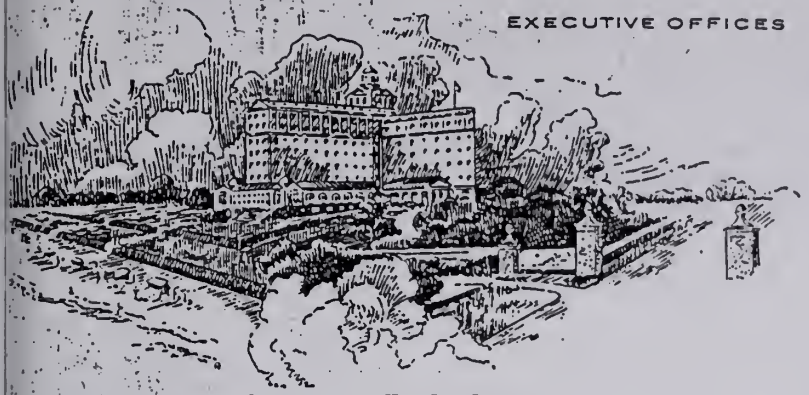
"We would'nt miss this dance for the world," said Mrs. Long. "We have a place in the mountains where it's cool but we had to come here for the dance."

Long was among the many men who found it necessary to take off their jackets early in the evening because of high temperatures. "The cool ocean breezes arent blowing tonight," he said.

"This weather won't keep me from dancing," said Dick Hudson, who jitterbugged with longtime friend, Millie Miles.

"We always come because we like big band sound," said Mrs. Merv Cooper whose white coiffed hair added dash to a blue chiffon gown.

"This is the last of the open air dances," said Helen Giannelli, "The floor is here, why don't we have more dances like this?"



EXECUTIVE OFFICES

OPEN ALL THE YEAR

The CAVALIER
Virginia Beach
Virginia

January 30, 1936.

SIDNEY BANKS
MANAGING DIRECTOR

Mr. T. P. Thompson,
City of Norfolk,
Norfolk, Virginia.

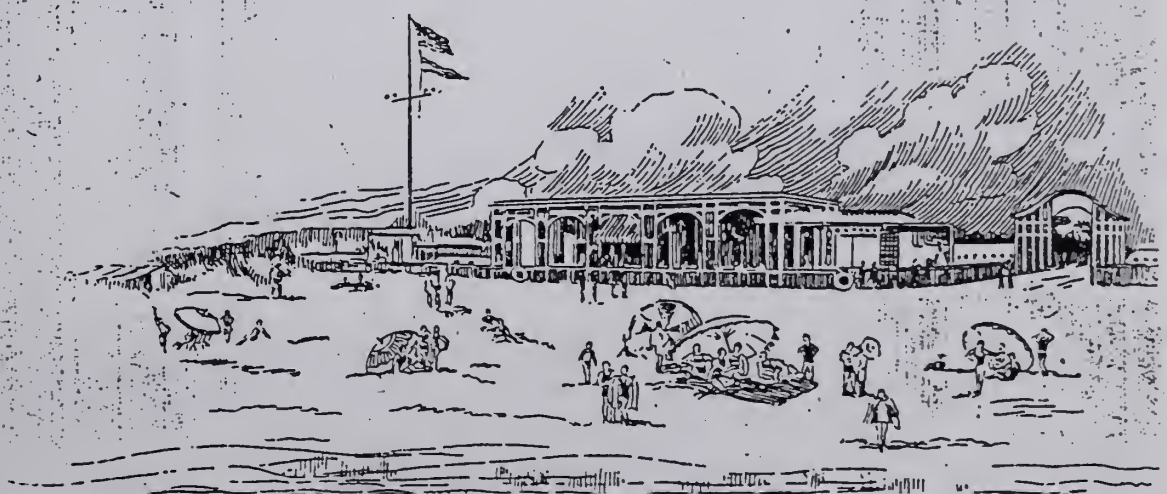
Dear Mr. Thompson:

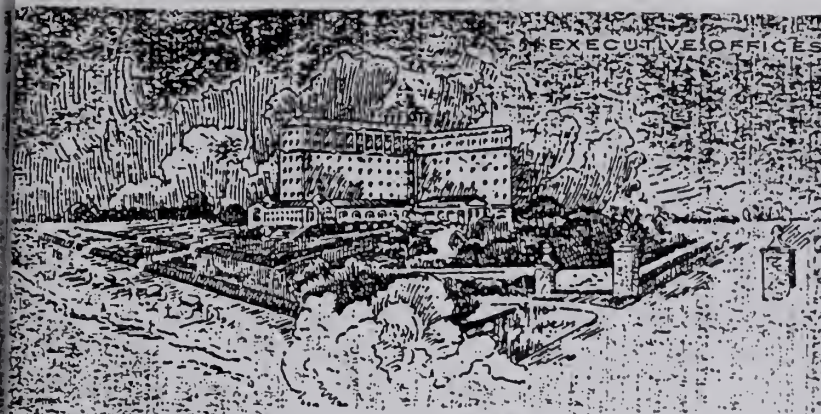
I was able to get in touch with Bob, and he came up to the office this morning. From the records he had on hand we were able to make up a statement, which I am enclosing herewith.

Bob tells me that he has no record of receiving a check from the Amateur Trapshooting Association in 1935; consequently this amount is not shown in the receipts in statement.

The 1934 balance of $24.32 Bob tells me was turned over to Mr. M. D. Hart. You will note that in the disbursements I took 75% of this item as a deduction from receipts, amounting to $18.24. This is in accordance with your letter of January 24th. I also deducted from the receipts $24.32, in as much as this amount has already been turned over to Mr. Hart.

I am enclosing herewith check made out to the Virginia Trapshooting Association, in the amount of $5.00, from the Roanoke Gun Club, which Bob turned over to me this morning, which he has endorsed as secretary of the association. I am forwarding this check to you, as I presume the president of the association should also endorse it.





OPEN ALL THE YEAR

The CAVALIER
Virginia Beach
Virginia

SIDNEY BAN
MANAGING DIRECTO

March 6, 1936

Mr. T. P. Thompson
City Manager
Norfolk, Va.

Dear Mr. Thompson:

I am very pleased to place in your hands, herewith, a complete supply of our descriptive literature. Folders similar to this are presented to the Secretaries of those associations agreeing to consider the Cavalier as convention headquarters.

We have been complimented very highly on this proposal and I trust that it will meet with your approval, as well.

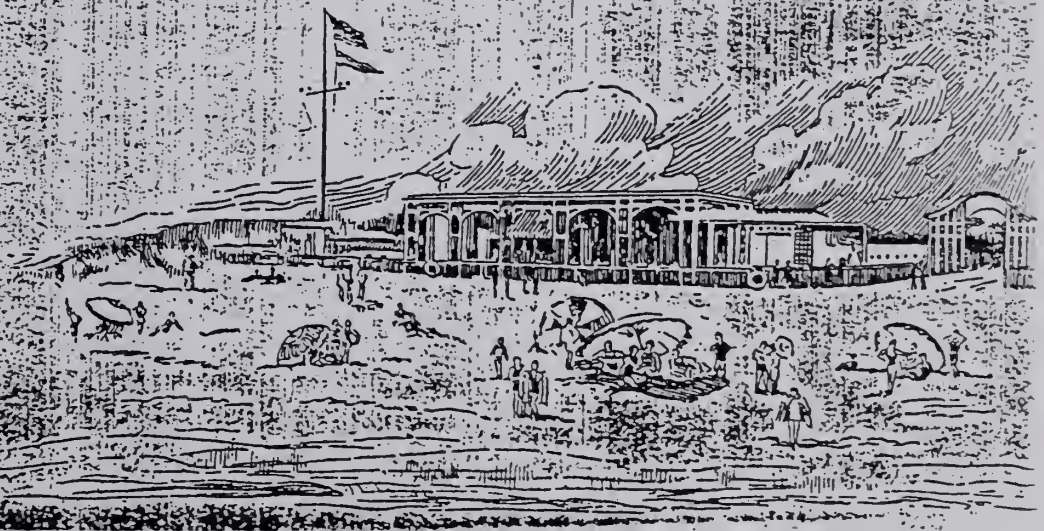
With kindest regards, I am,

Respectfully,

Sidney Banks

Managing Director

SB:C



Fitz

THE CAVALIER

VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

L. H. WINDHOLZ
PRESIDENT

September
Eleventh,
Thirty-six.

Mr. T. P. Thompson,
City Manager,
Norfolk, Virginia.

Dear Tommy:

As you know, at the meeting today you were designated as one of the Members of the Board to place the advertising for the Cavalier Hotel.

My reason for writing you is to advise that we have no advertising commitments at this time, but the Fall advertising should be ready now very shortly to catch the October publicity.

I am merely calling this to your attention so as little time as possible might be lost in arranging for our Fall advertising.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely,

Lou

L. H. Windholz

Cavalier Hotel adv.

THE CAVALIER
VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

EXECUTIVE OFFICE
L. H. WINDHOLZ
PRESIDENT

September
Seventeenth,
Thirty-six.

Mr. T. P. Thompson,
Municipal Building,
Norfolk, Va.

Dear Tommy:

Supplementing my letter to you of the fourteenth, about the advertising for the Hotel.

Mr. Serpell wrote me that he would be out of town but that you were Chairman of the Committee and would be available to handle this.

I do not think that we shall have to do any more cash advertising, but we ought to decide on what trade advertising we desire to utilize for this Fall.

Enclose you herewith letter from the Caples Company, wo are interested in taking over our advertising for next Fall and I can highly recommend them. Also, their travel contacts would be very valuable to us.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely,

L. H. Windholz

September 19, 1936

Mr. L. H. Windholz
C/o Norfolk Southern Railroad Company
Norfolk, Virginia

Dear Lou:

In yours of September 11th concerning my membership on the Advertising Committee for the Cavalier Hotel, it seems to me that the only practical way to handle this proposition would be for you and the Manager of the Hotel to work up a schedule as to the advertising you want to do and mediums you want to use and copy you want to use and then if the Committee of the Board can be helpful it, of course, will be glad to, but I cannot imagine that it was the intention of Colonel Slover, who made the motion in this connection, to expect this Committee to go out and actually select mediums, etc. If this was his idea I think it was thoroughly impractical.

I, of course, stand ready to do everything I can but I think first there ought to be a very definite understanding as to just what is to be expected of the Committee.

Yours very truly,

CB Thos. P. Thompson

Cavalier Hotel

THE CAVALIER
VIRGINIA BEACH, VIRGINIA

EXECUTIVE OFFICE
L. H. WINDHOLZ
PRESIDENT

September
Twenty-third,
Thirty-six.

Mr. T. P. Thompson,
City Manager,
Norfolk, Virginia.

Dear Tommy:

Thanks for your letter of the nineteenth.

I entirely agree with you. However, the motion as proposed was not any too clear. In view of what you say, I shall proceed along the lines as outlined in your letter.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely,

L. H. Windholz

CHICAGO NEW YORK

THE CAPLES COMPANY

ADVERTISING

230 PARK AVENUE
NEW YORK

September 15, 1936

Mr. L. H. Windholz, President
The Cavalier
Virginia Beach, Va.

Dear Mr. Windholz:

With reference to our conversation at Virginia Beach a week or so ago, I would like very much for you to consider the services of this organization in connection with the advertising of The Cavalier.

With our wide experience in the world of travel and transportation, I believe that we can create resultful advertising for The Cavalier and at the same time bring to bear our wide connections in your behalf.

Our clients include the following:

Anchor Line
Associated British Railways Inc.
Great Western Railway
London & North Eastern Railway
London, Midland & Scottish Railway
Southern Railway
Great Southern Railways of Ireland
Gleneagles Hotel, Perthshire, Scotland
American Express Company - world wide travel organization
Chicago & North Western Railway
Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railway
Delaware & Hudson Railroad Corporation
Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad
Illinois Central Railroad
Seaboard Air Line Railway
Union Pacific Railroad
Western Maryland Railway
Baltimore Steam Packet Company
Southern Pacific Steamship Lines
N.Y.K. Line (Japan Mail)

THE CAPLES COMPANY

Mr. Windholz - 2

I believe that this organization handles more advertising in the world of travel than any other advertising agency. Our years of specialization equip us to produce outstanding work for The Cavalier and, if appointed to handle your advertising, we would, of course, maintain a constant contact with the new Manager.

We do not handle competitive advertising and The Cavalier would be the only resort hotel in this country on our list. I believe that you personally are acquainted with the Gleneagles Hotel, Perthshire, Scotland, which is the key hotel in the chain operated by Mr. Arthur Towle of the London, Midland & Scottish Railway. We have represented this group successfully for several years.

The type of clientele we represent would undoubtedly be of value to The Cavalier during the year as practically all of them are in a position to recommend the resort or route business to you.

I shall be very pleased to come and discuss the matter with you personally.

With kind regards,

Very truly yours,

Vice President

A.Woodley/M

Cavalier Hotel advertising

WALES ADVERTISING COMPANY
INCORPORATED
The New York Central Building
230 Park Avenue
New York
VANDERBILT 3-4000 - CABLE "TRAVAD"

L. H. WINDHOLZ, President
The Cavalier
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Friday
Sept. 18
1 9 3 6

Dear Mr. Windholz: 1t

In advance of our talk next week, I will write you about a few thoughts which I have had concerning the advertising and publicity of The Cavalier for the coming winter season and thereafter.

The best interest of the hotel will be served by an advertising agency which has a strong enthusiasm for the hotel, has devoted close and constant attention to it, and has at all times evinced a keen interest in its welfare.

I mention this because, since you have written me that there is to be a committee of three, it has occurred to me that possibly one or more members of that committee will be persons who have not been aware of what we have done for the hotel in the past sixteen months, and it sometimes happens that a member of a committee has friends in the advertising agency business (as who hasn't?), and might want to suggest the appointment of such a friend, with the idea that "one agency is as good as another".

With an eye to the welfare of the hotel, and disregarding personal considerations, I think we are prepared to prove that we can give you more for your money than anyone else, and we hope you will agree with us that we have already demonstrated this.

When we first took over your advertising in June of last year, we made numerous suggestions, not all of which concerned advertising and publicity, but all of which, according to Mr. Banks, were well received by yourself, and many of which were put into effect.

We have, as you know, constantly advocated a higher-class clientele, and our campaign of advertising, which began in June of last year, was of a character which would attract a better class of guests. You had congratulatory letters and comments about this from several sources, including Tom Green, President of the A.H.A.

Possibly due in some measure to the influence of the advertising and due

also of course to the improvement in the hotel business last summer, the Cavalier had the best season since 1929, was able to increase its rates, and to restrict its clientele, up until mid-August, when the infantile paralysis scare put a crimp in the business of all hotels in Virginia.

However, the impetus gained in the summer was so favorable, that the hotel was able to keep open all winter with satisfactory results.

I don't know whether you are aware of the conditions under which we have worked during these sixteen months, and you know that there has been no complaint from us and that we have served loyally.

Mr. Banks turned over to us many thousands of dollars of due-bill contracts which had been arranged for by Vaughn Connelly, but on which no advertising had appeared, and he told us that if we would prepare the advertisements for these contracts, we would receive no commissions (these already having been collected by Connelly), but would be in line for renewals of due-bills a year or so later, with the same publications.

This meant the rendering of a large amount of service with no compensation, and we mention this only to show you that we have co-operated cheerfully at all times.

During much of the year, we were obliged to carry for the hotel a debit balance of about $4,000, but we had no complaint on this and were glad to offer the accommodation, although under normal conditions we are not expected to do so, and it is of course a considerable inconvenience, especially as it is contrary to the regulations of the publishers' associations to grant unusual credits in this way.

I and other members of our organization have made much more frequent visits to the hotel for the purpose of keeping in close touch and keeping our copy right up-to-date than would ordinarily be expected in an account of this size. In fact our whole thought has been that we would put "everything on the ball", regardless of profit or loss, with the expectation of helping you to develop the account over a period of years into one of the outstanding hotel accounts of the country--not in point of size but in point of quality and results.

I am sure that you yourself feel that our work has been effective and resultful for the hotel, but I am writing this letter, so that if other members of the committee may have other thoughts you will have something definite to refer to them.

Meanwhile I would mention again that we have been considering a number of due-bill proposals for the coming fall and winter and it would be well to act upon them shortly before the editors and publishers change their minds and decide to go elsewhere.

It is our thought that much of your advertising this winter can be arranged on a due-bill basis, so that you will pay cash only where it is unavoidably necessary.

While on the subject of due-bills, I would mention that there is a Connelly due-bill with Radio Station WLAC which calls for twenty-six 150-word scripts, all of which we are about to write. However, before doing so, we think it would be well for us to have the name of the new manager of The Cavalier, when appointed, also any new facts regarding the hotel that would be appropriate to incorporate in radio broadcasts for the fall and winter. We can take up these matters when I talk with you.

I wrote you yesterday that I would be going to Miami on the 26th. As this visit has just been deferred for about three weeks, I will instead come down to Norfolk especially, or any day you name.

I hope today's storm will not damage your cottage at the Beach, or the Cavalier Beach Club or Hotel.

With every good wish, I am

Yours very truly

James Albert Wales
President